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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
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HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 156**

FIFTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1988-89

House of Commons

Monday 3 July 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Flint Office

1. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the area covered by the boundaries of his Department's office in Flint.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lloyd): A review of the boundaries in this area is planned for September.

Mr. Raffan: As part of the review, and to assist claimants from the more rural areas of my constituency, will my hon. Friend give serious consideration to bringing the communities of Brynford, Cilcain and Mannerch under the Department's Flint office, as they are much closer to Flint than they are to Rhyl, which is the office under which they now come? Will my hon. Friend similarly reassess the communities of Leeswood and Pontblyddyn, which now come under the Wrexham DSS office?

Mr. Lloyd: I am aware of my hon. Friend's concern about these matters because he has been in touch with me. I assure him that the review will take particular account of the views that he has expressed.

Disability Benefits

2. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, in the light of the Social Security Advisory Committee's report, "Benefits for Disabled People: A Strategy for Change" he has any plans to increase spending on disability benefits.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Scott): We have already provided for an increase in spending on the sick and disabled in real terms of £1·9 billion by 1991-92. This is a real increase in expenditure of nearly 25 per cent. When we assess the implications of the outcome of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' surveys of disability we shall give careful consideration to the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee and other representations. However, it is too soon to say how this will affect existing expenditure plans.

Mr. Hannam: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he accept that most disabled people fall into the lowest income groups and that the sharply increased spending which he quoted is largely due to the increased numbers drawing benefit? Will he take into account in the proposed review of the benefits system the extra costs that the disabled face in their normal day-to-day living and ensure that increased resources are made available?

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend and the entire House will be glad that there is increased take-up, especially of the best-targeted benefits for the disabled. When we have all the results of the OPCS surveys, and when various organisations have had a chance to comment on them, we shall want to examine all the evidence, including the general situation of disabled people and the extra costs that they bear, to ascertain whether the benefit system deals with those needs as effectively as possible.

Mr. Corbyn: In his review of these matters will the Minister let the House know when he expects to be able to announce that he will make attendance allowance available to the parents of children under the age of two who are severely disabled? Those parents clearly suffer badly because of the need for extra care for their children. No extra benefit is currently available to them under the

social security system. The Minister promised when the recent Social Security Bill was being examined in Committee that with the outcome of the OPCS report he would make a statement about future benefits.

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman has raised one of a small number of subjects to which we are giving urgent attention. We must await the arrival of the last of the OPCS reports before we can come to a conclusion on the priority to be accorded to various matters. I assure the hon. Gentleman and the House that we are considering the matter with urgency and sympathy.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the Minister not ashamed of his recent complaint that, under supplementary benefit, people with AIDS received some double provision for diet since, as he must know, doctors are recommending diets costing over £30 a week for which many now receive no extra help at all? Will he accept that his inaction is life threatening? At the very least, will he make the disability premium available without the six-month delay? Finally, what is his response to the Disablement Income Group's current finding that about 50 per cent. of attendance allowance claimants find objection to some aspect of the medical examination?

Mr. Scott: What I said was true. Within the basic system of supplementary benefit and income support there is provision for a normal diet, and there are enhanced dietary payments. By the time that we got rid of additional requirements we introduced the disability premium at a level of £13·40 a week, if I recall correctly, and that will cover the majority of extra diets. All these matters, including the right hon. Gentleman's second point, will be appropriate to to be considered when we examine the findings of the OPCS reports.

Poverty

4. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the extent of poverty in the United Kingdom.

13. **Mr Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the extent of poverty in the United Kingdom.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. John Moore): Like Ministers in previous Governments, I reject the concept of a poverty line. I share the view of the Chairman of the Select Committee on Social Services that is is absurd to claim that a third of the population lives in poverty.

The term "poverty" is deliberately being confused with income inequality and those who claim that the poor are getting poorer ignore improvements in living standards and real income growth for people at all income levels since 1979. Perverse statistical definitions of poverty do not help to identify individuals and families in genuine need.

Mr. Smith: Did not the right hon. Gentleman contemptuously dismiss other definitions of poverty in his end-of-the-line poverty speech, and has he not done so again today? Does he at least owe it to the poor and to this House to state his definition of poverty? How many poor people does he believe there are in Britain today?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman obviously had considerable difficulty in hearing. I did not—nor did I today—dismiss, define or even seek to define poverty. Nor has anyone who has had the responsibility of Government. I sought to dismiss the absurd statistical definition described as the poverty line. As I said, that dismissal was shared by the Chairman of the Select Committee on Social Services, although it is not shared by the Labour party.

What I sought to do in that speech, and what I seek to do in Government, is to help those who can be identified as being in need. That is why we are spending a record amount of money on social security.

Mr. Macdonald: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that there has been a growing gap between the very richest and the very poorest in our society since 1979? Does he disown responsibility for that, or is he merely indifferent to it?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman is beginning to accept the fact that we are debating and discussing, with all sections of the population—all the deciles—improving their lot over the past 10 years and examining the relative position between them. We can then begin to discuss matters on a more rational basis. The hon. Gentleman will no doubt wish to know how the Government, thanks to their economic success, have helped the poorest far better than did the previous failed Labour Government with their miserable performance.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that although, under this Government, pensioners have had the largest-ever increase in their living standards, many pensioners are in difficulty because they do not regard the state pension as a top-up? Will he consider ways to help that group? It would not be a major strain on the state as the group comprises people who cannot take advantage of the economic miracles to which my right hon. Friend rightly referred.

Mr. Moore: As my hon. Friend said in Select Committee, he recognises that the Government are trying to deal with precisely the problems that he mentioned. For example, this autumn the Government will go beyond the 16 per cent.—1·6 million pensioners—who are already on income support with the special pensioner package to help 2·6 million pensioners. That is an effort to help those least able to help themselves who have not benefited by quite as much as the remainder of the pensioner population.

Mr. David Nicholson: Is not one advantage that has flowed from my right hon. Friend's speech on poverty some weeks ago the sensible, realistic and constructive debate in the country about the needs of various groups? The debate has been contributed to by, among others, the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) in an article in *The Sunday Times*. What groups has my right hon. Friend identified as requiring further attention and what he is proposing to do to help them?

Mr. Moore: I am glad that my hon. Friend referred to the constructive debate in the country. All the editorials in the major press had identified the absurdity of a statistical definition before the Labour party introduced its review, in which it confirmed its attachment to that absurdity.

Two sections of the population where, with better statistical definitions, we have identified clear need are needy families and pensioners who have not historically

benefited as much as others. Our new premium structure in income support this spring and our new special package to be introduced this autumn will help precisely those groups and will, I imagine, be welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Secretary of State agree that notwithstanding the welcome help that will be given in October to that group of pensioners, who are suffering dire financial hardship, there is still a need? Have the Government planned beyond October, and is there any hope of the Christmas bonus being increased or of help being given with fuel during the coming winter?

Mr. Moore: I fully understand why the hon. Gentleman would like to open up the debate beyond the autumn. I recognise that we should constantly try to understand and to resolve the real needs of those who are relatively less well off. I shall try to continue that process, because I know that it will be welcomed by rational right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. McCrindle: Whatever may be our definition of poverty, can it possibly extend to those people to which an article in *The Sunday Times* referred yesterday under the heading

"Jobless tenants living for free in luxury flats"?

Is it true, as that article alleged, that private landlords are making substantial profits? If so, does my right hon. Friend intend taking powers to control that situation, on the basis that although we have no wish to be difficult with the jobless, we must look to the taxpayers, too?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend has a long history of understanding and trying to help people, so I know that he would like me to remind the House that all those on income support have their housing benefit—their rent—essentially 100 per cent. covered. I saw the article in *The Sunday Times*, and my hon. Friend is right to remind the House that it is necessary to prevent abuse. He will be happy to know that we are taking additional powers through the Social Security Bill to protect the public purse while equally trying to protect those in genuine need.

Mr. Frank Field: Although I accept that it is the Government's policy to be selective, I invite the Secretary of State to quote all my article, not just part of it. In the article that he cited, I compared British society up to 1979 with a train journey, with first, second and third-class compartments—the political debate being about who received which tickets, but all of us heading in the same direction. Since 1979, some of the compartments have been detached and there has emerged from them an underclass. How do the Government answer that part of the argument?

Mr. Moore: I have the whole of the hon. Gentleman's article before me, but no doubt neither he nor the House would want me to argue against it all. The critical point that I sought to make was that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), unlike the Labour party, understands the statistical absurdity of defining a poverty line. I know that the hon. Gentleman would like to be reminded that, taking all the 10 per cent. categories in the country over the past decade, the bottom 10 per cent. have seen an improvement, according to the latest data that we have, and their real position has improved by 6 per cent. All the other groups—all the way to the top—have shared in the inherent growth in prosperity. I know that the hon. Member for Birkenhead will welcome that.

Mr. Baldry: Is it not right to say that between 1975 and 1985 households having the lowest one fifth of incomes have seen their incomes rise by about 14 per cent? If that is so, does it not make complete nonsense of any notion that the poor are getting poorer? Does it not prove that that is simply not true?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right. The whole subject merits nothing less than the most serious attention, and it does not serve those who are in need to argue the statistical absurdities by which some people have allowed themselves to be trapped. Instead, it serves people in need to identify that need so that more effective help can be given. Fortunately, we have the wealth of a much more successful society to enable us to do that now.

Mr. Robin Cook: Does the Secretary of State accept that if poverty is in decline, it certainly has nothing to do with the Government's social security policies? Did he notice last week's study by York university of unemployed families, showing that three quarters of them cannot afford essential clothing and that two fifths cannot afford to a sound diet? Is not that reasonable evidence that those families are in poverty? If the Secretary of State accepts the truth of that, what does he say to another of the report's conclusions: that, as a result of last year's benefits cuts, half the families concerned are now even poorer than they were two years ago?

Mr. Moore: I start by asking the hon. Gentleman to be more accurate. I imagine that he has not had the benefit of reading the reports. I certainly have not, but I have the benefit of understanding their basis. The survey was conducted before last year's social security reforms. Researchers only suggest, and the reports themselves studied only 67 families in the autumn of 1987. Given the smallness of the survey, and the fact that it covered a period before the reforms, I do not accept the conclusions that the hon. Gentleman has drawn. What I do say is that the hon. Gentleman should have welcomed the way in which the Government have been able to increase, in real terms, expenditure on those least able to look after themselves by more than 31 per cent. in the past 10 years. That is a sign of targeted additional help as a consequence of the present wealth of the country.

Social Fund

5. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the progress of his Department's publicity campaign to increase take-up of social security fund grants and loans.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We will shortly publish information material on the social fund to improve awareness among those who have the greatest need for these payments and, most importantly, their advisers.

Mr. Evans: That is all very interesting, but of what benefit has all that expensive advertising been to a 55-year-old unemployed male constituent of mine? He lives alone, has recently been refused the higher level of benefit and is now forced to exist on £35·52 a week. Is that not a classic case of the poor getting poorer?

Mr. Lloyd: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I cannot discuss a particular case at the Dispatch Box. If he wishes to get in touch with me about it, I should be happy for him to do so .

As the hon. Gentleman knows very well, there has been no expensive advertising for most of the benefits that are available. They are very well taken up. We are running right up to profile on the budgets for the social fund, which has become well known and is doing a good job.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although it must be right to target money where it is most needed, the problem of targeting is that most social security offices, certainly in Birmingham, are much under spent because people need almost an honours degree to know what they can claim? Does my hon. Friend also agree that saving people distress is much more important than saving money and that, if we are to get the changes truly right, we must ensure that people know what they have a right to and that the appropriate people obtain the care that is so desperately needed?

Mr. Lloyd: Let me answer the general point by saying that £9 of every £10 of social security benefits is claimed. As for the social fund, I agree with my hon. Friend that it is important for people to know what is on offer, and that they are entitled to it. The information material to which I referred in my answer to the main question is designed to ensure that groups with a particular entitlement to the social fund know exactly how far it extends and what is available to them.

Disability Surveys

6. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' surveys on disability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Organisations of and for disabled people are already commenting on the published findings of the OPCS surveys of disability. We welcome these comments, which contribute to the process of reviewing disability benefits in the light of the final data.

Mr. Thurnham: Having extended the availability of the mobility allowance from 75 to 80-year-olds, will my right hon. Friend now use the OPCS surveys as a basis for a thorough review of disability benefits, and will he consult fully the relevant disability organisations?

Mr. Scott: I am anxious to announce—when we have the final data—a timetable for further action and consultation will balance the need to listen carefully to the views of organisations of and for disabled people with no undue delay in the necessary action.

Mrs. Beckett: The whole House will welcome the fact that, even before all the reviews have been published, the Government have accepted the case for restoring to the terminally ill some of the payment for attendance that they lost during the latest social security cuts. Will he reconsider the refusal to put even an enabling clause into this year's Social Security Bill, as, by definition, most of those who fail now to meet the six-month qualifying period are likely to be dead before the change in the law takes place?

Mr. Scott: We must wait until we have the final results of the survey. As I have said, that—along with the matter raised by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn)—is something that we were prepared to consider on a faster track than other matters. I think that I must let it rest there for the time being.

Family Credit

7. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families on low incomes have experienced an increase in their incomes in real terms as a result of the introduction of family credit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: Precise estimates of real increases in income are not possible, but family credit is now providing more help to more families. The average amount in payment is over £25 compared with £15·28 for family income supplement and the very latest figures show that at the end of last week 263,400 awards were actually in payment. But with 86,400 claims still being processed I estimate that the underlying case load is now 315,000.

Mr. Riddick: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that many families at the bottom end of the income scale are definitely better off since family credit was introduced? However much the Opposition might huff and puff, that cannot be denied. Does he agree that rather than handing out indiscrimimate blanket subsidies through child benefit, it is far more sensible to target those families who genuinely need help through family credit, as the Government are now doing?

Mr. Moore: I remind my hon. Friend of what my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security said in a debate not too long ago: that there is a judicious mix of targeted benefits that go along with, as in the case with income support, a special family premium and family credit. I am delighted that there has been a major improvement in take-up consequent upon the advertising campaign. We are spending £4·5 billion out of a budget of £9 billion on help to families with children. I remind my hon. Friend of what we said in our election manifesto on the issue, as well as of my statutory duties. We are seeking to achieve a balance between broad, targeted benefits and indiscriminate benefits of the child benefit kind.

Mr. Frank Field: As the Government are so pleased with the take-up of family credit, may we assume that they are equally pleased with the amendment that was passed recently in the other place linking increases in child benefit to the increases in this new, super family credit?

Mr. Moore: I am as pleased as I am sure the hon. Member is that additional help is going to families on low incomes. The hon. Gentleman is referring to an entirely different matter. The other place is still considering the Social Security Bill, which will return to this House at some stage. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members will recall vividly that the House took a clear decision on the subject earlier this year.

Mr. Knapman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those on low incomes are most affected by inflation and that it ill behoves the Opposition to lecture us on either subject?

Mr. Moore: That is absolutely right. For generations inflation destroyed the savings of pensioners. Above all else, we must ensure that we eradicate inflation.

Housing Benefit

8. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to ensure that delays at social security offices do not lead to housing benefit claims being held up with consequent accumulation of unanticipated rent arrears; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am not aware of delays in social security offices that may affect the award of housing benefit. Turnround times for income support claims for the month of April 1989, the latest available figure, averaged 4·7 days while those for changes in circumstances averaged 1·3 days. These figures compare with 8·1 and 4·8 respectively for April 1988. This significant improvement reflects the success of the Government's reform of social security and the hard work and commitment of the staff of local social security offices.

Mr. Allen: I am staggered that the Minister has no evidence of delays. I shall certainly try to help him with evidence from Nottingham, North and no doubt some of my hon. Friends will send him information about their constituencies. Has he read the National Audit Office report on the implementation of the charges in housing benefit which was published recently? Has he also read in the report the evidence that was given by a senior officer in his Department? Is the Minister aware that his Department and his boss are criticised in the report for delays, for not bringing forward the programme early enough, for not allowing local authorities to develop their software and for not allowing local authorities enough time to put their staff into place? I ask the Minister to read the report. It affects constituents. Some of my constituents lost almost £1,000 through a build-up of arrears that were totally unknown to them. They had never been in debt before. The report was signed by members of his Department, and they agreed the wording. Will he either sack them or implement the recommendations of the National Audit Office report?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman is talking about something that is quite different from his question. I know of no delays in local offices that are holding up the payment of housing benefit. There have been complaints about the delay in transitional payments, but when they are examined one finds that in most cases the hold-up is due to information not having been received from local authorities.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: As the supplementary question referred to delays in local social security offices, and as the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) and I share at least one such office, would it not be fair to the staff who work in that office to make it plain to the House that normally they deal with every single claim that comes into the office within five days, and with most of them within 48 hours?

Mr. Lloyd: I believe that the performance of the local offices in Nottingham is very good indeed. I took it that the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) was implicitly criticising them in asking his question. If he has any particular examples that he wishes to bring to my attention, I shall be happy to investigate them.

Dr. Reid: May I recommend that the Minister reads the National Audit Office report? Like my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), I am a member of the Public Accounts Committee. I have read that report, and I can assure my hon. Friend that his summary is far more accurate than the Minister's response —which was based on a 30-second conversation with his boss, the Secretary of State, who is sitting beside him. Transitional units are merely compounding the problem that they were set up to alleviate due to the long delays in assessment and because when assessment produced a rebate the money was not forwarded to the local authorities in time, so tenants who had never been in arrears in their lives received an assurance from the transitional unit that they would get rebates but the money never arrived, producing a commensurate build-up of arrears. Will the Minister do something about that?

Mr. Lloyd: The transitional payments are operating extremely well, although there were some hiccups, but the main question was not about transitional payments. Like the hon. Member for Nottingham, North, the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) has not referred to cases in his local offices or cases known to him in which payment of housing benefit has been held up due to a lack of information passing from the local office to the local authority.

Social Security Reform

9. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes he has made as a result of monitoring the social security reforms introduced in April last year.

Mr. Scott: The memorandum supplied by the Department to the Select Committee on Social Services on 6 June, copies of which are available in the Library, includes a full list of the major changes we have made.

Mrs. Roe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his reply, but what has been done to help 16 and 17-year-olds who are forced to live away from home?

Mr. Scott: I know that my hon. Friend agrees very strongly with the main thrust of the Government's policy towards 16 and 17-year-olds, but the whole House will welcome the fact that 16 and 17-year-olds who have to live away from home will receive a higher rate of income support—the rate normally paid to 18 to 24-year-olds—if they are estranged from their parents. The higher level will also apply to those on housing benefit.

Mr. Pike: Why does not the Minister make at least one further change to help those people on protected payments who were on supplementary benefit before the system was changed and are now on income support, who received absolutely no increase in April? With inflation running at 8·4 per cent. they are considerably worse off. Why does he not make at least one change to help those people?

Mr. Scott: When we introduced the new system, we wanted to get rid of the complexities of the old supplementary benefit system. To avoid the erosion of transitional protection would perpetuate those inequalities and complexities for the future. I am quite sure that we are right to erode it.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Has my right hon. Friend been able to monitor the working of the social fund, particularly the ability of people living on very low incomes to repay loans

for items of domestic equipment which go wrong and on which they have to borrow? How can they find £5 a week out of £46 a week?

Mr. Scott: We shall shortly be publishing the first report on the social fund. A report has also been produced by the social fund commissioner herself. There is little evidence to show that people are unable to take up loans from the social fund because of their inability to pay.

Mr. Robin Cook: May I press the Minister on the observation of my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) about claimants on transitional protection? Is he aware that figures from his own Department show that next April 200,000 claimants will get no increase as a result of transitional protection? What does he say to the chronically sick claimant who wrote to me because he had just been informed that he would get no increase for another four years? Is it fair to leave a disabled claimant without any increase for seven years in total? What more monitoring do Ministers need before they recognise that in common decency all claimants, whether or not they receive transitional protection, must share in next year's uprating?

Mr. Scott: I still believe that the policy of eroding transitional protection is right. No constituent can know or calculate the number of years that it will take before his transitional protection is entirely eroded. I also remind the House that in October we shall be providing protection for elderly and disabled pensioners which will not affect their transitional protection.

National Insurance

11. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much he expects to collect in national insurance contributions during the current year; what the expected figure will be next year; what the figures for each of the last two years were in real terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lloyd: The yield from national insurance contributions is expected to be more than £32 billion in the current year and more than £33 billion in 1990-91. In the past two years, contributions yielded £31·1 billion and £32·3 billion in real terms.

Mr. Greenway: Will my hon. Friend confirm that those figures represent 16 per cent. of Government revenue and that NICs as an acronym for national insurance contributions are not aptly named? Will the Department be pressing the Chancellor to remit national insurance contributions from more low-paid people as happened this year?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend rightly said that the yield from national insurance contributions represents 16 per cent. of Government receipts, compared with income tax which represents 23 per cent. Naturally, the DSS—particularly my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—makes representations to and has discussions with the Chancellor and the Treasury about how much such revenue should be applied. I am sure that my hon. Friend took special pleasure from the reductions that were made in NICs for the lower paid in the last Budget.

Mr. Flynn: The huge anticipated increase in national insurance yields is sufficient to give, from October, an increase of £3 per week for a single pensioner and £5 per week for a pensioner couple. Does the Minister agree that anyone other than the Government plundering the national insurance fund would end up in court on a charge of fraud? Do the Government intend to continue to attempt not to pay the Treasury supplement which has been paid for three quarters of a century? Is the Minister aware that if the supplement were paid at the same rate as in 1979, a single pensioner would now be receiving an additional £11·50 per week and a pensioner couple an additional £18 per week? When will the Government stop using the national insurance fund to steal from pensioners? Directors enjoying an annual increase of 27 per cent. are steaming ahead in the first-class carriage while pensioners are in a detached, third-class carriage moving rapidly backwards.

Mr. Lloyd: If any stealing was done, it was when the last Labour Government imposed the 3·5 per cent. surcharge on industry. That was a huge burden on business, but we have got rid of it. There will be no short-changing of pensioners. They will receive the full increase, according to inflation, to which they are entitled this autumn. In addition, the poorest pensioners—those on income support, those over 75, and those over 60 who are disabled—will receive an extra increase in October. That shows not merely that pensioners receive their full entitlement from the fund but that we look after those who are least well off.

Family Credit

12. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many more families are in receipt of family credit than received family income supplement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: My best estimate of the underlying caseload for family credit is 315,000, compared with around 220,000 on the same basis for family income supplement.

Mr. Amos: I am delighted to see how successful family credit has been. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is time to abolish child benefit and add that money to family credit so that more people in the greatest need can be assisted rather than state money being given to rich people who do not need it?

Mr. Moore: As I said earlier, we provide £9 billion in support for families with children, £4·5 billion of which is provided through child benefit. As my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security said in an earlier debate, the Government aim to provide—not only because of our manifesto commitment to child benefit but because it is my statutory duty—a judicious mix of intelligent targeting through income support, child premiums, family credit and child benefit to help families with children. The Government would not maintain that commitment as strongly as we do unless he believed that that mix was right.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In the light of the continuing industrial action on the railways and the statement made by the National Union of Railwaymen and others that railwaymen are grossly underpaid, will the Secretary of State set up and inquiry to report rapidly on the number of NUR members and other people working on the railways who are earning poverty wages and being forced to draw, in effect, a public subsidy to subsidise their wages?

Mr. Moore: I am always intrigued by the way in which the hon. Gentleman manages to get so many different issues into one question. I shall continue to do as is my duty——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Set up an inquiry.

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman is always extremely articulate from a sedentary position. *[Interruption.]* If he and other Opposition Members can contain themselves for 30 seconds, I will seek to answer the question. The Government are fortunately able to spend about £400 million this year on support for families on low incomes as against about £180 million on family income supplement and as opposed to the £48 million spent on similar families when Labour was last tragically in office. The sum spent was so low due to Labour's appalling inability to run the economy. That is the difference and I am sure that the House will endorse it.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Ministerial Conduct

54. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Attorney-General why, pursuant to his answer of 12 June *Official Report*, column 549, he does not accept the premise that it is important to our system of government that Ministers do not tell lies to the House of Commons.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): No sensible construction of my answer can support that assertion.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the Attorney-General believe the leak from Sir Leon Brittan, who complains that Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell approved the disclosure of his letter? How, as a Law Officer of all things in this Government, can he remain easy when he sees the people who abused his own actions more prominent in Madrid than the Foreign Secretary?

The Attorney-General: I am afraid that I cannot encourage the hon. Gentleman by adding anything to the answer that I gave on 8 May to his hon. Friend for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

Mr. Teddy Taylor: If my right hon. and learned Friend cannot do anything about that, can he at least do something to protect the people against political parties which constantly sing songs proclaiming people's power and red flags, but then say that they want to surrender all power to Brussels and the bureaucrats?

The Attorney-General: I am expected to be extremely versatile in this position, but my authority does not extend to taking any such steps as would satisfy my hon. Friend.

Mr. Winnick: Are we to believe that someone in Government lied about the leaking of the letter, but that parliamentary convention does not allow the Attorney-General to say so? Do we take it that civil servants at No. 10 lied, or is the Attorney-General telling the House that he believes what we believe about the leaking of that letter, but that as a member of the Government he is hardly in a position to say so?

The Attorney-General: I thought that I had dealt as usefully as was within my power with much the same question from the hon. Gentleman on 8 May.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that if

"Brevity is the soul of wit"

constant repetition must be the sign of a most unoriginal mind?

The Attorney-General: We all have our own styles, but as I have a frog in my throat I had better emulate those who practise brevity.

"Today" Newspaper Story

55. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Attorney-General what action for interference with the course of justice he has taken against the *Today* newspaper for its front-page story on 11 May headed, "Maggie IRA Bomb Squad Seized" concerning the arrest of three Irishmen who were later released.

The Attorney-General: The matter is under consideration.

Mr. Mullin: Does the Attorney-General agree that such newspaper reports give credence to the belief that an Irishman cannot hope for a fair trial in this country?

The Attorney-General: No, Sir. The hon. Gentleman does no service to the administration of justice in this country by asking such a question, but I do not suppose that he intends to.

Mr. Stanbrook: Under his powers to restrain interference with the course of justice, will my right hon. and learned Friend consider the leader of the Storehouse group, who has announced that he intends that his shops should open on Sundays in clear breach of the law? Can he not be committed?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not believe that that question has anything to do with the IRA.

Personal Injury Cases

56. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Attonery-General what measures are in hand to assist county courts in meeting the additional caseload of personal injury cases transferred to their jurisdiction; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): Such cases are increasingly concentrated in 43 trials centres, which are organised to guarantee a continuous hearing in all the longer cases and thus make efficient use both of court rooms and of judges' time, and provide a better service to litigants.

Mr. Allen: Is the Solicitor-General aware that one of the main avenues through which ordinary people on normal incomes come into contact with justice is through personal injury cases? Will he therefore take particular steps to ensure that there are no unnecessary delays in bringing such cases to court? Those cases, many of which involve trade unionists and others injured at work, are being delayed because they are being transferred to the county courts. Will the Solicitor-General take steps to improve the situation? A number of county courts are now issuing notices of delays, of which I have a number of examples. One case recently brought to my attention is of Luton county court, where no foreseeable date is given for

such cases coming to court. That is tragic for the individuals involved. What does the Solicitor-General intend to do about it?

The Solicitor-General: My primary answer was that the longer cases should be concentrated into particular trial centres. However, the hon. Gentleman can rest assured that our objectives—not only in the civil justice review, which was announced recently, but in the proposed rule changes to come next January in advance of the civil justice review—are to achieve the aims that the hon. Gentleman set out.

Mr. Fraser: Is the Solicitor-General aware of some of the inadequacies and inefficiencies of the county courts? Camelford county court, for example, stopped sending out notices in June because the postal budget had been spent and notices had to wait until the following month. Can the Solicitor-General confirm that the rule for county courts will not be penny-pinching justice, but the efficient and speedy administration of justice for all?

The Solicitor-General: I confess that I was not aware of that idiosyncrasy of Camelford county court, but I will have the matter looked into and write to the hon. Gentleman.

Judges

57. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Attorney-General what qualities the Lord Chancellor looks for in prospective judges; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: High Court and circuit judges are appointed by the Queen on the recommendation of the Lord Chancellor. The criteria for selection are judicial potential, ability, experience, reputation and personal inrtegrity.

Mr. Greenway: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply. Is he satisfied that, in practice, all those appointed to be judges, including Judge Pickles, satisfy those criteria? Is there any prospect within the reforms envisaged for the legal profession of the appointment of lay judges—properly advised, perhaps, in view of the judges' role in advising on the law? Would it be possible to appoint people such as ex-bishops—*[Interruption.]*—ex-headmasters and even ex-Cabinet Ministers to be judges?

The Attorney-General: My right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor attaches the greatest importance to the criteria that I have mentioned. Great care is taken and there is wide consultation on the appointment of judges. Whether there would be a higher incidence of the totality of those criteria if eligibility for the higher courts and higher judges were extended as my hon. Friend suggests is a matter for debate that he may like to take up elsewhere.

Mr. Skinner: Is it true that the bottom line of the application form that the Lord Chancellor overlooks says, "Is he one of us?" in accordance with the Prime Minister's dictum, and how many judges are freemasons? Has the Attorney-General done a survey on that? If the threatened strike of barristers and others goes ahead at the Royal Courts of Justice—it was put off a short time ago—will the strike breakers feature prominently as future judges and will the Economic League be given a list of the strike leaders? Will all that be taken into account?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman will find that the selection of judges is made far more widely by the present Lord Chancellor, and by all his predecessors of either party, than would be the case if the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends were ever in a position to appoint judges.

Mr. Rowe: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that for cases involving children and young people there is considerable merit in having a judge whose taste in music post-dates the Beatles? For cases involving children, will he consider appointing the equivalent of the French juge d'enfants, who is often a much younger person on his or her way up the legal ladder?

The Attorney-General: I very much take my hon. Friend's point. Jurisdiction over the family and especially over children is of the highest importance and calls for special qualities. My right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor seeks to appoint to the family division judges who demonstrate those qualities and his appointments meet with considerable success. It is not necessarily a question of one's taste in music, which could be pre-Beatles as well as post-Beatles.

Immigration Rules

58. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the recent correspondence between the Treasury solicitors and immigration adjudicators concerning the application of the immigration rules in appeal hearings.

The Solicitor-General: The Treasury Solicitor wrote not to adjudicators but to the president of the immigration appeal tribunal, on whose behalf he had acted as legal adviser in the judicial review proceedings. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 9 June.

Mr. Cohen: Has not the Attorney-General had to admit that there was a blatant attempt to interfere with the judiciary in immigration tribunal cases, and is not that interference of constitutional significance? Who was responsible? Was it a Minister or the staff of a Minister? Will the Solicitor-General explain? Should there not be a public apology?

The Solicitor-General: If the hon. Gentleman had taken the trouble to read the reply to his hon. Friend, he would have found his questions answered and his mind set at rest.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Peru

59. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to increase development grants to Peru.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): I have no plans at present for an increase. It is likely that we shall maintain our programme of technical co-operation to Peru at approximately current levels for the foreseeable future.

Dr. Howells: Given the way in which certain British companies are growing fat by tearing the mineral wealth

and the rain forests out of South America, why do we allocate such miserable amounts of aid to countries such as Peru, which are struggling democracies attempting to rebuild their economies? As those countries are trying to prevent themselves from becoming dominated by the drugs barons who grow drugs there and since the British Government set up such a hue and cry about fighting those drugs barons when the drugs come into this country, why is more money not given to help those struggling democracies to overcome the problem at source?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman has covered a broad waterfront, with a number of non sequiturs en route. I shall be interested to discuss the problem of tropical rain forests with him when I return from Brazil in a week or two.

On the hon. Gentleman's point about the total size of our programme in Peru, we have never had large programmes in Latin America—under Governments of either party—because much of our aid is concentrated on Commonwealth countries and on the poorest countries. We have a programme of about £1 million in Peru, but I remind the hon. Gentleman that there are 77 countries poorer than Peru.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the biggest difficulties about development programmes with Peru is that country's inability to sort out its international financial affairs? Is it not high time that the Peruvian Government buckled down to sorting out their debts and financial position, as much of the rest of Latin America has already done?

Mr. Patten: Peru's best chance of getting more capital aid lies in reconciliation with the multilateral banks with which it is at present in arrears.

Non-commercial Aid

60. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the gross national product is accounted for in non-commercial aid to developing countries in *(a)* 1975, *(b)* 1980, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1989.

Mr. Chris Patten: United Kingdom net official development assistance and grants by United Kingdom voluntary agencies represented 0·41 per cent. of GNP in 1975, and 0·37 per cent. in both 1980 and 1985. The figure for 1989 will not be available until next year. The provisional figure for 1988 is 0·35 per cent.

Mr. Evans: Will the Minister take this opportunity to deny the scandalous story in yesterday's edition of *The Observer* to the effect that recent British non-commercial development aid to Malaysia was tied to the purchase of British armaments?

Mr. Patten: I have denied that story many times. It is quite an old story. It first surfaced in *The Guardian* in June last year and has since been recycled in *The Observer*. I denied it most recently and explicitly in evidence to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Jack: I wish my right hon. Friend well on his forthcoming trip to Brazil. Will he confirm that one of the most effective ways in which Britain can help with non-commerical aid is by making expertise available to countries such as Brazil to help them deal with their forestry problems?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is entirely correct. We have as much expertise on tropical forestry matters in this country as exists anywhere else in the world and some splendid experts, such as Dr. Prance, a member of our recent environmental mission to Brazil.

Third World Development

61. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what studies his Department has sponsored of the role of the free market in fostering economic development in the Third world.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department is sponsoring a range of studies. They include assessment of the more liberal economic policies that many developing countries are pursuing under structural adjustment programmes and the role of market forces in stimulating agriculture, forestry, industry and foreign trade.

Mr. Marshall: First, I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his appointment to the Privy Council. Does he agree that in the Third world, as elsewhere, there is a strong correlation between economic growth and the adoption of a social market economy? Will he therefore concentrate our economic assistance on those countries that have had the foresight to adopt the social market economy rather than indulging in a mindless morass of Marxism and Socialism?

Mr. Patten: I am much obliged to my hon. Friend for his kind personal reference and I am lost in envy at his final alliteration. I can confirm what my hon. Friend said about the importance of market forces and the price mechanism in supporting sustainable economic development. We have put an increasing amount of our aid into supporting economic reform programmes which are more likely to encourage the development of the private sector and inward private investment. I am delighted that so many countries are pursuing more sensible economic policies and I note that the leader of the Labour party, Peter Mandelson, is also more in favour of market economics these days.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Has the right hon. Gentleman had his attention drawn to the exposure by the *Daily Record* of conditions on the tea plantations in Bangladesh of James Finlay and Company? Will he join me in deploring the outrageous exploitation of labour, including child labour? Does he accept that that is the unacceptable face of the free market in the Third world and, if so, will he bring the matter to the attention of the Commonwealth Development Corporation?

Mr. Patten: I have not seen the report to which the hon. Gentleman draws attention, although I condemn such exploitation wherever it occurs. We are involved in a number of projects on the tea estates of Bangladesh to improve housing and other social conditions. That is a sensible and important use of our aid money. I hope that private sector companies as well as public sector companies will do all that they can to ensure social equity as well as market forces as the best engines of economic growth.

Andean Countries

62. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to increase aid to the Andean group of countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have no plans at present to increase aid levels to the Andean group of countries. I expect our aid programmes to those countries to be maintained at approximately current levels for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Sheerman: I congratulate the Minister on his promotion. Is it not about time that he seized the opportunities of his office and started to do something for undeveloped countries, notably those in South America where, after 10 years of Conservative Government, only a measly £10 million flows from this wealthy country to countries that are struggling for democracy and struggling to fight drugs and poverty? When will the Minister do something?

Mr. Patten: I will answer that question as though it were a string of compliments. I know of the hon. Gentleman's interest in the region and his particular interest in Peru, which is as welcome in that country as in this. I repeat what I said earlier. We have traditionally concentrated our aid programmes on the Commonwealth and on poorer countries. If we are likely to do more in Latin America, it will almost certainly be due to our growing interest and concern about environmental issues. That is one reason why, as I said earlier, I am going to Brazil later today.

Overseas Development Administration Silver Jubilee

63. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to celebrate the Overseas Development Administration's silver jubilee.

Mr. Chris Patten: On 28 June my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, in the presence of Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal, hosted a reception at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to mark the publication of an anniversary edition of the ODA's annual review. Copies are being distributed widely. Earlier that day, I launched at the Royal Society of Arts two new specially commissioned videos on the key issues of the environment and the role of science in development.

Mr. Knight: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best way to celebrate 25 years of aid is to give further encouragement to those charities and other non-governmental organisations which have played such a significant part in development? Should we not be encouraging more volunteers to go to developing countries?

Mr. Patten: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. We helped 60 charitable agencies last year in long-term development work covering 800 projects. We should be able to do more this year, having increased the funds available for the joint funding scheme by just over 40 per cent. We are also increasing the amount of financial assistance to volunteering agencies. This year their grant will have risen by just over 20 per cent. I hope that the number of volunteers will increase from about 1,300 now to about 1,500 by 1990.

Miss Lestor: Enjoyable though the celebrations were last week—the right hon. Gentleman was kind enough to invite me—I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman has seen in the jubilee edition of "Overseas Development", the ODA newspaper, the anger expressed by former Minister Dame Judith Hart at the Government's record in the past 10 years. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that there is more to celebrate in 25 years of ODA than glossy brochures and pleasant receptions, much though we all enjoyed them? Will the right hon. Gentleman mark the occasion by announcing his timetable for British aid to reach 0·7 per cent of GNP, bearing in mind that if press speculation is correct and he leaves ODA this summer he will leave behind a drop in aid in real terms of 18 per cent. since 1979?

Mr. Patten: In response to the hon. Lady's latter point, I think it was someone like Cardinal Manning—or perhaps it was Lord St. John of Fawsley—who said:

"I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me."

In response to the hon. Lady's first point, the fact that we quote Baroness Hart in our publication does not show that we agree with her, but merely that we believe in a plural society. I am delighted that this year the aid programme is growing by 12 per cent. in cash terms and 7 per cent. in real terms.

Points of Order

3.33 pm

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Was it in order for the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to imply in a recent question that there was corruption in the appointment of judges? Far from being funny, were his remarks not entirely out of order?

Mr. Speaker: I do not recollect that anything that the hon. Gentleman said in my presence was out of order.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I would like to place it on the record that I did not pay the hon. Gentleman to say that.

Mr. Speaker: I have protected the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). He does not need to do anything else.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to seek your guidance. On Wednesday we face another hugely disruptive strike on the railways, with both sides being as far apart as ever and no sign of any move towards a new arbitration system. Have you had any indication from the Government, Mr. Speaker, about when they might share their thinking with us as to how British Rail can be helped to get out of this terrible mess which is having a bad effect on industry, on my constituents and on the constituents of Croydon?

Mr. Speaker: I have had no such notification. The Leader of the House is on the Treasury Bench, and I am sure that he will have heard what the hon. Member has said.

Water Bill (Allocation of Time)

3.34 pm

The Minister for Water and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move,

That the Order of the House [6th February] be supplemented as follows:

Lords Amendments

1.—(1) The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed in two allotted days and shall be brought to a conclusion at Seven p.m. on the second of those days.

(2) The order in which those proceedings are to be taken shall be Lords Amendments 1 to 43, Lords Amendment 55, Lords Amendments 44 to 54, Lords Amendments 56 to 116, Lords Amendment 155, Lords Amendments 117 to 154, Lords Amendments 156 to 237, Lords Amendments 267 and 277, Lords Amendments 238 to 266, Lords Amendments 268 to 276 and remaining Lords Amendments.

(3) Subject to the provisions of the Order [6th February], each part of those proceedings shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion at the time specified in the third column of the Table set out below.

Table—Proceedings

Allotted day	*Lords Amendments*	*Time for conclusion of proceedings*
First day	Nos. 1 to 13	6.00 p.m.
	Nos. 14 to 43 and No. 55	7.30 p.m.
	Nos. 44 to 54 and Nos. 56 to 116	10.00 p.m.
Second day	No. 155, Nos. 117 to 154, Nos. 156 to 237 and Nos. 267 and 277	5.00 p.m.
	Nos. 238 to 266, Nos. 268 to 276 and Nos. 278 to 311	5.30 p.m.
	Remaining Lords Amendments	7.00 p.m.

(4) Paragraph 7 of the Order [6th February] (extra time on allotted days) shall not apply to the allotted days for the proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments; but where the conclusion of any of those proceedings is postponed until a time after Ten o'clock under paragraph 9(4) of that Order (Motions under Standing Order No. 20), paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to those proceedings until that time.

2.—(1) For the purposes of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment or, as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

[Mr. Michael Howard]

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to each Amendment designated by Mr. Speaker which has not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Amendment; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3.—(1) The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill shall be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of the proceedings.

(2) For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental provisions with respect to certain proceedings

4.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of the Message or for the appointment and quorum of the Committee.

(3) A Committee appointed to draw up reasons shall report the conclusion of the sitting at which they are appointed.

(4) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(5) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(6) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

(7) If the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before the expiry of the period at the end of which any proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion under this paragraph, no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

I move the motion as the House comes to the end of the long and exhaustive consideration of a Bill which fully honours our election manifesto commitment to return water authorities to the public and to establish a National Rivers Authority. We shall shortly see scenes of synthetic outrage from the Opposition about the time that is allowed for consideration of the Lords amendments. I want to start by getting some facts on the record.

The Bill has already been debated in this House for two days on Second Reading, for 153 hours in 35 Committee sittings, and for three full days on Report and Third Reading—a total of 198 hours before today.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Minister explain why, despite the massive amount of money that has been spent to publicise the Bill, all the propaganda and so on, the latest poll shows that 79 per cent. of the population are totally opposed to water being privatised? Is it not clear that the Government have no mandate for it? If there were a free vote tonight, the Bill would not receive majority support, and the Minister knows that.

Mr. Howard: I welcome Opposition Members' new-found enthusiasm for opinion polls. However, opinion polls may come and opinion polls may go. By the time the only opinion poll that matters takes place the proposals will be working well in practice and their advantages will be apparent to all our people.

Although the Bill has been guillotined, we have used the timetable procedure not to impose unreasonable restraints on debate but to allow for a sensible allocation of time to the different elements of the Bill. That would not have occurred if Opposition Members had continued with the pace that they set in Committee, when they managed to go so slowly that, after 75 hours, only nine clauses had been debated. The Bill has also been examined in great detail for more than 100 hours of debate over 13 days in another place. It is simply not possible to argue that the Bill had not been fully considered. Throughout those many hours of debate, the Government have listened carefully and sympathetically to all reasonable arguments put before them. We said at the outset that if sensible improvements were suggested, we would respond positively to them. That is precisely what we have done, and that is why it now falls to this House to consider these amendments.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Does my hon. and learned Friend consider that we have sufficiently discussed the protection of land that is currently owned by Thames Water? The assurances that he gave at the beginning of last month have recently been withdrawn, thus making a great deal of Thames Water's land available for redevelopment rather than protection by the local authority because of its conservation or environmental use.

Mr. Howard: It is not right to say that assurances that were given earlier in the month or about a month ago were withdrawn. We shall no doubt debate this matter more fully when we consider the amendments relating to land. When we put forward our original amendments relating in particular to specific protection for land in national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty, we were met with a chorus of opposition on the basis that sites of special scientific interest should be specifically designated and that the reserve power to which we pointed as being available to deal with that aspect of the problem was, in effect, a waste of time and not worth the paper that it was written

on. We responded to those criticisms as we have responded to so many other criticisms. We have inserted specific protection in the Bill for sites of special scientific interest and removed the reserve power that met with disapproval when it was introduced.

I invite the House to consider the nature of the amendments which were inserted into the Bill in another place. There are 341 of them, but many of them are so technical that they do not even warrant grouping other than in one large group. Even some of those technical amendments are to meet points raised by the Opposition. Of those that are grouped, we have difficulty with only two. Of the rest, well over half the groups of amendments on the Notice Paper are Government responses to arguments that had the support of all sides in another place. Many of the rest represented minor tidying-up points. The nature of the amendments before the House today can be judged by the fact that only once in another place were the Government obliged to go through the Division Lobby in support of them. In this House the Opposition have not put down a single motion of disagreement with any of the amendments that were made in another place.

That is the background against which the protest that we shall doubtless shortly hear from Opposition Members needs to be assessed. We have, of course, known from the outset that the Opposition were committed to a policy of delay and frustration, but we wish to press on with the Bill which provides the key to cleaner rivers and beaches and purer drinking water. It is this Bill which gives the industry access to the private capital that it needs to complete the clean up; it is this Bill which puts an end to the gamekeeper-poacher conflict that has so bedevilled the operations of the water authorities; and it is this Bill which gives the workers in one of our most important industries a real stake in the future.

The time has come to deal with the few remaining issues and to move on to the next stages—putting the regulatory framework in place, vesting the functions, assets and liabilities of the authorities with the new companies and, in November, selling the shares in those companies to the public so that they can take a direct stake in the industry that lies at the heart of so many of our environmental concerns. I commend the motion to the House.

3.41 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I am sorry to disappoint the Minister so early in my remarks, but I assure him that none of the synthetic anger that he was forced to mention so often in his brief remarks will emanate from the Opposition. There may be some synthetic support, however, from Conservative Members in the Division Lobby.

It is eight months this week since the Second Reading of the Water Bill in the Chamber. The Secretary of State's parting words then were:

"This is a good Bill for consumers, for future shareholders, for taxpayers, for workers in the industry; above all, it is a good Bill for the environment."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 344.]

The Opposition feel rather sorry for the Secretary of State and those who have had to do the Prime Minister's dirty work on this very dirty Bill. After the Football Spectators Bill, one might say that this is the flood. Over those months, the Minister and the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan), who is not present now, although I am sure that he will be around later in the proceedings, have had to prop up a case in support of privatising the nation's water assets which, frankly, is so ramshackle as to have no hope of surviving for very long. They have spent eight months on the pathetic task of trying to persuade the British people that water privatisation is a good or even a desirable thing for consumers, taxpayers and the environment. It seems, however, not only from the responses from the public during those eight months, but even from a survey this weekend, that they have failed to persuade anyone. *The Observer* Harris poll showed yesterday that 79 per cent. of people remain implacably opposed to privatisation; 79 per cent. are worried or very worried about the quality of our bathing beaches; one third of people are dissatisfied with the quality of their drinking water; 69 per cent. think that water should meet new European standards before any sell-off is even contemplated; 68 per cent. think that the Government's record on pollution control is not at all good or not very good; and 85 per cent. think that water will cost them more after privatisation.

Whatever else Ministers have been doing during the past eight months, they have singularly failed to persuade the British public that there is much good, if any, in the Bill.

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend will be the first to agree that the Opposition should always be fair. Does he blame, as the Prime Minister blames, the Secretary of State and the Minister for Water and Planning? Could they be responsible for the public's failure to accept water privatisation? Does not the real responsibility lie with the Prime Minister? Were it not for her, such dangerous nonsense would not have been pursued in the first place. Does my hon. Friend agree that the public will not buy this rubbish, whoever puts it forward, and that the responsibility does not lie with the Secretary of State or the Minister, however much one recognises that the Secretary of State is the last person to persuade anyone?

Dr. Cunningham: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Bill, like the Football Spectators Bill and the poll tax before it, is here because the Prime Minister has insisted on its being placed on the statute book against all the advice of independent people and, I am sure, much private advice from many of her right hon. and hon. Friends. The Secretary of State and the Minister are scapegoats for the Prime Minister's dogmatic attitudes. Too bad, one might say, for the Secretary of State and the Minister; too bad that they are forced to push through the Prime Minister's views; too bad that their campaign to persuade even the City that water is a worthwhile and desirable investment has collapsed with only a few months to go before the predicted sell-off date. Matters have become worse for the Secretary of State and the Minister following the Prime Minister's magisterial rebuke in February over their handling, or mishandling, of the issue.

This colossal and vital Bill has been guillotined at every stage. It was curtailed in Committee and on Report, and today, as we are presented with 341 amendments from the other place, debate is curtailed again, less than a week since the other place finished considering the Bill. We shall have a mere day and a half in which to debate 341 amendments and to try to amend some of them. I thank the Minister for having the courtesy and for taking the

[Dr. Cunningham]

trouble to give us sight of the amendments as early as possible. I place on record our appreciation of that. His task was obviously incredibly difficult because he was able to provide information to us only as late as Wednesday evening of last week. Had it been provided to us any later, the opportunity for the Opposition to consider and table subsequent amendments would not have existed. That is not acceptable and I have no doubt that others outside the House will perceive that to be so.

The real reason for guillotining this stage of the Bill's consideration is that this is one of the most damaging pieces of legislation around, and the Government want it out of the way as quickly as possible. On every occasion on which the Bill is discussed in Parliament and outside, damage is done to the Government's credibility. I assure the Government that the fact that they may be curtailing debate today and tomorrow does not mean that the issue will go away or that the Labour party will stop opposing it and campaigning against it in the country over the weeks, months and years between now and the next general election.

We have a day and a half, and a number of important questions remain to be asked. I almost said "answered", but I suspect that there is little, if any, hope of getting answers to some of the questions. For example, when will the British people's drinking water meet minimum European standards? Almost 11 million British people are served with water that is below European minimum standards. The position for those people is unsatisfactory and it is likely to remain so.

The Minister went to Brussels last week. There was some publicity in advance of his visit, but almost a cloak of secrecy has been drawn over what happened while he was there. Almost uniquely for the Government and for the Minister's Department, there has been no press statement or announcement following his discussions with the Environment Commissioner Carlo Ripa Di Meana. That suggests that relations are not what they might be between the Government and the Commissioner about the provisions in the Bill.

No doubt the Government will later attempt to overturn an amendment carried in the House of Lords that provides for a date of 1993, already several years late, to meet the objectives for drinking water quality. We look forward to hearing from Ministers why they cannot accept even that modest attempt to put matters right. Indeed, I wonder whether the guillotine will allow time for a proper and adequate debate on that matter.

When will we hear more from the Government—they have not yet answered our questions—about the drinking water inspectorate? The House is entitled to some meaningful details about the operation of that body, hidden away somewhere in the Department of the Environment, whose job it will be to regulate the quality of our drinking water. As yet, there have been almost no details about that body.

When will we hear the final decisions and the whole truth about the so-called cost pass-through—that provision in the appointment to allow companies to make extra charges outside the price control formula? We all remember the Secretary of State's claim at the outset that prices would rise in real terms by no more than 10 per cent. a year. That is obviously a hopelessly inadequate assessment of what the public will face.

At the end of Third Reading, in a speech when the Minister read out everything except the London telephone directory, he said that my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Callaghan of Cardiff did not mention the water industry in his memoirs. I wonder whether the Secretary of State will mention this Bill in his memoirs when he comes to write them. I doubt it. I do not think that he will regard the past eight months as a purple passage in his parliamentary and ministerial careers.

What about the flotation itself? Some kind, anonymous person today sent us a copy of a document produced by J. Henry Schroder Wagg and Company Limited, the Government's advisers on the flotation, entitled "Offer Structure". The document sets out the advice that is no doubt being given to Ministers about the structure of the offer and the flotation of the nation's water assets. Unlike previous flotations, the document recommends:

"There will be no maximum application value for the separate offers."

The Government are obviously so concerned to ensure that they receive at least some offers to purchase that they are not setting a limit. The document continues:

"the Stock Exchange has agreed that neither form of prospectus need be advertised in the national press; only application forms".

Presumably, the Government do not want to advertise the prospectus because they do not want people to know exactly what it is they are being invited to buy.

I do not have time to read all the document into the record, but on page 4 it states:

"The need to underwrite all ten offers is expected to give rise to some new variations on the now familiar structure.

Early investigation suggests that the UK underwriting unit may be worth between £10,000 and £25,000, representing between 8 and 20 package units each comprising 1,000 shares in the ten WSHCs."

In other words, underwriters will be obliged to buy shares in all 10 water authorities whether or not they want to do so.

Underwriters, like the rest of us, know very well that some of the water organisations are not saleable. Who, left to his own devices, would buy North West Water, Yorkshire Water, or some of the other authorities that have huge backlogs of problems in respect of pollution, inadequate plant and collapsing infrastructure? The authorities will be sold off to the underwriters in little parcels, so there will be no escape.

I wonder what Mr. Roy Watt of Thames Water thinks about his organisation being underwritten along with all those less saleable assets? Even the fund managers themselves do not want that to be done, as a poll published yesterday confirms. Seventy-nine per cent. of them want to pick and choose which water authority stock they underwrite because they, too, know that otherwise they are likely to be left with unsold stock on their hands.

Perhaps the most amusing and revealing part of the document is the outline offer timetable on page 6, which is a far more important timetable than that which the Government are talking about today in connection with the Lords amendments. The outline timetable begins:

"1st September. VESTING

6th September. Earliest date for launch of flotation marketing campaign.

2nd October. Institutional lunches and dinners begin."

Some underwriters are about to find out that there is no such thing as a free lunch. The outline continues:

"31st October. All documentation in near final form.
1st November. Publication of pathfinder prospectus.
2nd November. Commencement of national and regional roadshows.
21st November. Pricing meeting.
Completion meeting.
22nd November. IMPACT DAY
29th November. Prospectuses generally available.
6th December. OFFER CLOSES.
12th December. Basis of allocation announced . . .
20th December. Posting of documents of title . . .

So for the man who has everything, at Christmas this year buy him a sewage works.

Given the taxpayers' interest, the national interest and the environmental interest in water privatisation, that timetable is far more important than the fatuous, shoddy little timetable that we are debating.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will explain to other right hon. and hon. Members who have not been so privileged as to see the document from which he quotes—it sounds as though the hon. Gentleman is indulging in mere variations on its theme—whether that document is confidential. Was the advice that it contains given confidentially? When the hon. Gentleman becomes a Minister in some future Labour Administration, what action will he take if private and confidential advice is leaked in the same way?

Dr. Cunningham: I shall answer the hon. Gentleman's last question first. The action that I shall take as a Minister will be to support in the Lobby at the earliest opportunity a freedom of information Bill.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): The hon. Gentleman will lose his job if he does.

Dr. Cunningham: The Secretary of State says that I would lose my shirt, and he is wrong about that, too. A freedom of information Bill is one of the Labour party's principal commitments. On matters concerning environmental pollution, the British public will never be satisfied until all the facts and information are honestly and accurately presented to them. Ministers would be far better advised to be more candid about the problems of this hopeless legislation than to sit there baying their opposition to a freedom of information Bill.

Let me return to the first question asked by the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker). He is welcome to a copy of this document if he would like one. As I said, it is headed

"J. Henry Schroder Wagg and Co. Limited . . . Offer Structure".

It says nothing about confidentiality or secrecy. I have no idea of the origins of the document; I am not claiming that it is a leak from the Civil Service, or even that it is a Government document. It is an interesting document, however, and one about which people are entitled to know.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): As the water stock will be no-growth because there will be so little opportunity for development, will not high dividends have to be paid to the investing public? Will not water charges have to reflect an exorbitant level of dividends as, in effect, the value of the company will not increase?

Dr. Cunningham: I agree with my hon. Friend's analysis. Moreover, because of the problems that need to be resolved, there will be additional increases in the cost to water consumers.

Whatever the time available for our deliberations today and tomorrow, the Government will never be able to guillotine public opinion. They cannot guillotine the views of the City, or its huge and adverse reaction to the proposals. However hard they may try, they cannot guillotine the European Commissioner and the views in Europe about the inadequacies of the Bill; nor will they be able to guillotine the environmental damage and pollution problems inherent in the legislation, especially as it contains a provision to excuse private enterprise water monopolies from polluting the environment and to give them immunity from prosecution.

The Government cannot guillotine our emphatic opposition to the legislation or the political reaction against them when they come to explain all this at the polling station—and fail.

4.2 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): It is difficult to take seriously the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) when he describes the Bill as one of the most damaging pieces of legislation. It has been widely credited—even by Opposition Members—with containing significant environmental advances, as the hon. Gentleman knows very well. His hon. Friends who were not members of the Standing Committee and clearly have never read the Bill and do not appreciate the long period of gestation before it was published may talk in gimmicky-slogan terms. The fact is, however, that the Bill represents important environmental advances.

The first main advance, alluded to briefly by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister, is the ending of the position where water authorities are both poacher and gamekeeper. When the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs looked into coastal sewage pollution in 1985, one of the main points on which Opposition Members—not at parliamentary level, but at local government level—petitioned us was the need to end that position. They said that there was no way in which water authorities could monitor sewage discharges effectively when they were discharging sewage themselves.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raffan: Not now.

The setting up of a National Rivers Authority will therefore create a position that Labour Members have long requested. That is the first significant environmental advance in the Bill.

The second is one to which Opposition Members would not be expected to allude. The water authorities, as water companies, will automatically be freed from the restraint of Government external financing limits. In plain language, that means that they will not have to compete with other Government Departments for finance for important capital expenditure on water infrastructure and sewage works. Opposition Members do not refer to that because the last Labour Government cut capital spending on water infrastructure by a third and on sewerage infrastructure by a half. Let me respond directly to the point made by the hon. Member for Copeland.

[Mr. Raffan]

Compliance by 1993 might have been possible but for the gross, inexcusable and highly irresponsible neglect of the last Labour Government who slashed capital spending on water infrastructure by a third and on sewerage infrastructure by a half.

I do not want to indulge during my brief speech in non-parliamentary language, but what the hon. Gentleman said was bordering on hypocrisy. I do not think that that word is outside the parliamentary code.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raffan: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman in a second, if he will sit down for a moment. I am sure that he does not want to hear this, but he is going to hear it, whether he likes it or not.

It is time that the Opposition and the country heard these things. If the quality of our water is not as good as it should be, although it is improving, and if our beaches are not of as good a quality as they should be, although they, too, are improving, the responsibility and the blame lie with the Opposition for their gross neglect during their period in office.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us, because he has obviously been sleeping for some time, how long the Conservative Government have been in power and why they did not do something about the problem long before this?

Mr. Raffan: That is the kind of weak intervention which one would expect from the hon. Gentleman. I am not quite sure why he is not on the Opposition Front Bench today. Perhaps he has been demoted. Capital expenditure on the water infrastructure has been steadily increased during the last 10 years to make up for the gross neglect of the Opposition when they were in power. They ought to give credit to the Government for the two significant environmental advances that are included in the Bill. They will be of major importance to all water consumers.

In his normal spirit of generosity, which those of us who were members of the Standing Committee came to expect, my hon. and learned Friend alluded in his speech only to the number of hours in both Houses that have been devoted to the Bill. He did not refer to the tidal wave—to continue my watery metaphor—of irrelevant points that were made by Opposition Members in Committee. Today the Opposition have complained about the time for debate being restricted, yet they wasted so much of their time in Committee. The hon. Member for Copeland referred in Committee to netting 24 salmon with his English setter Sam. I am glad that the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) is here because he updated us in Committee about the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea.

Dr. Cunningham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raffan: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman in a minute. He can wait. He has given us his dissertation. I am not finished yet with the Opposition.

The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) told us all about his mother being an Owen and his uncles and aunties being Evanses, about Tommy Steele and "Half a Sixpence", about the landscape of William Tell and about undrinkable British tea. We had all that from the Opposition, yet they expect us to take them seriously when they ask for more time to debate the Bill. It is a bit rich of them to expect us to provide that when they wasted so much time in the first place.

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman has a particularly short, inaccurate and limited memory, as we know from previous exchanges. If he thinks back to our exchanges in Committee about my ability to catch salmon, he will remember that that matter arose only because of the question—I shall not say the allegation—of his hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) that I am not a salmon fisherman.

Mr. Raffan: That is another lame intervention. I also remember the hon. Gentleman saying to the Chair that he realised that he was being diverted into irrelevancies. We do not think that he is such a weak-minded individual that he cannot resist challenges by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), which are never of a highly provocative nature and which most of us are able to resist. If most of my hon. Friends are able to resist them, surely the hon. Gentleman is not so weak-minded that he cannot resist them.

There have been few pieces of legislation in this Parliament or in the previous Parliament that have had such a long period of gestation. The Government's first mention of water privatisation was as long ago as 1985, after which a consultation document was published. There was then a discussion document, and after the announcement in 1986 there was a White Paper, two consultative papers and wide Government consultation. This led to a manifesto commitment which has been widely ignored by the Opposition.

The Opposition are highly selective. They choose their opinion polls to suit them. One opinion poll which used a far wider sample than that published in *The Observer* yesterday was the one on 10 June 1987 using a sample of some 25 million people as opposed to just over 1,000 people. We believe in an opinion poll sample of half the electorate while the Opposition pick and choose one of between 800 and 1,000 people. We have a strong manifesto commitment which has been backed by the people. The Government have an absolute right to see the legislation passed through both Houses of Parliament so that it receives Royal Assent in time for privatisation to take place. As my hon. and learned Friend the Minister said, by the next general election the new water plcs will be up and running and working extremely effectively. I doubt that it will remain a party political issue for long, and probably will not be raised the next election.

There have been few examples of privatisation for which the argument is stronger than it is for water. Of course the Opposition have conveniently ignored the arguments against them, as they always do, especially the fact that one in four consumers already receives water from private statutory water companies, and therefore from a private source. They receive their water efficiently and they do not complain about its quality. That situation will prevail for everyone in this country after privatisation. We have heard nothing but humbug and hypocrisy from the Opposition. Let us get on with debating the amendments.

4.11 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) spoke with great virulence, but it was not always clear whether he was waving or drowning.

The Government are in serious difficulty with the Bill for a number of reasons. It is certainly an unpopular Bill. We have heard at length about the opinion poll evidence that the British people are opposed to it. Hon. Members on both sides of the House must be aware that many members of the public who are against the Bill have been motivated to write to their Members of Parliament. Many of those people do not normally write to their Members of Parliament, but feel sufficiently strongly about this issue to do so.

The most recent opinion poll shows that four out of five people are still steadfastly opposed to what the Government are doing, while millions of pounds of their money is being spent on promoting the issue on their television screens and on poster hoardings. Perhaps more significant, and of greater concern to Ministers, who have never shown great signs of being worried by public opinion and what ordinary people think, is the fact that six out of 10 fund managers are also opposed to the privatisation of water, certainly until EC standards are met. The experts in the City know a dead duck in the water when they see one. That is what the Government are bringing to the people by producing a Bill which is unpopular and is unlikely to be a success, even in the Government's limited terms.

In response to all that, the Government are not reconsidering whether to go ahead; they are not looking to the British people, or the fund managers if they prefer, and saying, "Maybe we have got something fundamentally wrong." Instead, they squirm around within the Bill looking for ways in which they can reduce the duties that they were originally proposing to place on the water industry in order to buy off their worries and doubts and sell down the river the people who seek improvements in the water industry. At the last minute, an amendment has been sneaked in to wipe the slate clean and to give private water companies immunity from prosecution for at least a year after the sell-off.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) has intervened many times, and there is little time for debate.

The Minister may wish to take into account the strong feelings that have been expressed in my part of the country. Given South West Water's record locally, I suspect that it will experience difficulty in finding buyers. This week, the police will probably be giving the findings of their investigation into the Camelford incident, so it is a poor gesture for the Government to be offering water companies further immunity in order to make the sell-off work. Few people in my part of the world will be satisfied by that. Anyone considering water privatisation would do well to consider what happened to the people of Camelford and the Government's action in offering water companies immunity from prosecution.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: Time is short, so I will not give way.

The Government have stated that they wish to reverse a Lords amendment that aims to bring Britain's drinking water standards up to EEC standards by 1993, which is already eight years late. The commitments that we thought might be given and the opportunities for change that we expected are receding further into the distance.

The Government propose to legalise thousands of spillages of raw sewage into rivers and streams. One cannot have confidence in a Government who are so sternly led on the water privatisation course by a Prime Minister who is unaware that untreated sewage is being pumped into seas around our coast. More sewage is pumped into the sea in my area than any other throughout the country. I recently spoke at a meeting in my constituency at Gorran Haven, which was organised by local residents who by no means are stern opponents of the Government. The water authority attended to present its case. My constituents still see water being polluted by raw sewage and must still pull their children out of the water when they see turds floating in the sea. The most striking aspect of that meeting was the feeling that such pollution needed to be tackled and that the Government's approach was fundamentally wrong. People of all backgrounds and political persuasions rightly believed that the Government's approach was fundamentally wrong.

Once again, debate is being guillotined, as it has been throughout every stage of the water privatisation proposals, thereby not only putting private profit before public debate but gagging debate on the Bill. That is not acceptable, but it should come as no surprise as the Minister, despite all his soft words, knows that he does not carry the British people with him. However much the Government cut debate and rush the Bill through, they do not and will not carry the British people with them. People in my part of the country are rising up and saying that they want public investment to solve public problems. They are clear that the pollution of our seas and water courses and the trouble that we have had with our water authority are not private but public problems. Nothing that the Minister does in selling off water authorities will change their opinion.

4.19 pm

Mr. Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I thought that a hint of desperation entered the speech of the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor). I would be desperate if my party went down to 7 per cent. in the opinion polls.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): It is down to 3 per cent. in the Boy Scouts' poll.

Mr. Leigh: I will not add to my hon. Friend's comment. Unfortunately, he is disbarred from speaking in this debate. He would bring great knowledge to it, particularly about salmon fishing.

The Liberal party is not doing well because it has lost much of its green vote. Once the Bill becomes an Act we shall recoup much of the ground which, according to the Opposition, we may have lost. Fundamentally, this is a green Bill. It is a matter of pride to Conservative Members that we are setting up, for the first time, a national environmental protection agency.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): What about the blue vote?

Mr. Leigh: At the next general election it will be clear that the Conservatives have not lost any support because of the Bill. As Bills go through it is necessary for the

[Mr. Leigh]

Government to explain their case. Sometimes people are genuinely worried about a radical measure, but once this Bill becomes an Act and people see how things settle down, they will come to thank the Government because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) has said, for the first time the gamekeeper-poacher problem has been tackled.

I shall not deal with the financial record of the previous Labour Government, but the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) failed to answer some questions. No doubt the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), as an upwardly mobile member of the Labour party, will answer them when she replies on behalf of the Opposition.

This is a green, environmental Bill. Perhaps the hon. Member for Dewsbury will tell us why the Labour Government failed to list a single bathing beach for the purposes of the 1975 bathing waters directive. Can she explain why Labour took no action to implement part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974? Perhaps she will explain why the previous Labour Government prevented members of the public from initiating prosecutions of river polluters. I note that the hon. Lady is busy talking to her hon. Friends on the Front Bench. It is clear that she does not want to explain, but the House wants answers. We are the green party because we are setting up an environmental protection agency. It is no good the hon. Lady looking round desperately as I have a couple of other questions for her. How did the previous Labour Government discharge their responsibilities for monitoring involuntary pollution by sewage treatment works when they kept no record of the adequacy of their performance?

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North) *rose——*

Mr. Leigh: I shall give way with pleasure, but can the hon. Lady explain why the Labour Government kept the details of discharge consent applications secret from the public and refused to allow the public to participate in the process of granting them?

Ms. Walley: As the hon. Gentleman has claimed that the Conservative party represents green votes, will he admit that the only thing that is green about this Bill are the green worms that came through London's tap water and the people whose hair turned green in Camelford as a result of aluminium poisoning? What has he got to say about that?

Mr. Leigh: If the hon. Lady wants to be a member of the next Labour Government she must do much better than that. She must answer the five questions that I put, which were perfectly reasonable. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) is not prepared to answer them, but I hope that the hon. Member for Dewsbury will.

Debates such as this always follow the same pattern. I think that I shall scream if someone again, says that, on one day, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) moved five guillotine motions. I accept that it is a good point, but it is always made. Usually the right hon. Gentleman attends such debates, which are, fundamentally, always the same.

If there were a Labour Government in the future and if the hon. Member for Dewsbury decided to renationalise electricity, water and British Telecom and, by that stage, perhaps British Rail and British Coal, would she produce five guillotine motions in one day? We shall have to wait and see.

I believe that I now know something about how Standing Committees work. I was not only a member of the Committee that considered the Water Bill, which sat for more than 150 hours, but a member of the Standing Committee that considered the Self-Governing Schools Etc (Scotland) Bill, which also sat for 150 hours. It was also guillotined and we heard the same arguments as we have heard today. Television is about to enter the Chamber and no doubt it will cover our Standing Committees. It is about time, therefore—this is a non-party political point—that we considered timetabling Bills from the very start. Once television comes into the Standing Committees, we cannot have the procedures and speeches that we have had not only on this Bill, but on others of whose Committees I have been a member.

I am surprised that no hon. Member has so far mentioned the irrelevant speeches and the speeches on the *Tatler* of the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng). When I was a member of the Committee on the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Bill, the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) talked for several hours in his lilting Gaelic on a matter totally irrelevant to the Bill because Labour Members had to prove to the people of this country that they were a powerful, virile Opposition who would continue to speak ad nauseam. As soon as a timetable motion for this Bill was introduced the quality of debate improved markedly, as it did on the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Bill. I am convinced that we should bring in timetable motions at the beginning of Bills.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister will remember that I tabled several amendments in Committee. I suspect that once the timetable motion has been accepted, there may have been some collusion between the two Front Benches.

Mr. Soames: No, surely not.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) says no. However, once a Bill has been timetabled, it is far easier for the Front-Bench spokesmen to ensure that the main Labour party amendments are discussed. It keeps them happy, and they can then go to their constituents and say that they are doing their job. However, serious amendments tabled by Conservative Back-Bench Members, which do not make a party political point, but merely wish to improve the Bill, are frozen out. If Bills are to be timetabled regularly, it should be done near the beginning of the Bill. In addition, the Chairman should be given more authority in deciding how the Bill should be split up so that Conservative, Labour and minor party Back-Bench Members are given time to debate the Bill.

In principle, after so much time has been devoted to the Bill, there is no reason why we should not have a timetable motion. Most of the amendments that we are to discuss today are technical. On that basis, I support the timetable motion. My plea to my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench is for them to consider for next year, once our proceedings are televised, whether Bills should be timetabled far earlier.

4.26 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The hon. Members for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) and for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) are kidding themselves if they believe that this is a green Bill as it does nothing to solve the problems facing the water industry. They know that they will pay the price for this legislation at the next general election, not only because of the Bill's unpopularity, as shown in the opinion poll, but because it will not deal with the problems facing the water industry.

The timetable motion is outrageous in that it seeks to limit our ability to debate the many important principles that we still need time to consider adequately. As I have said several times recently, the Government increasingly dislike democracy and the opportunity for debate because they do not want people to have the opportunity to voice opinions in any way different from their own. So long as they remain in power, democracy will become a sham as they remove the opportunity for genuine debate.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): It is already a sham.

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend says that it has already become a sham, and to some extent he is right.

The hon. Member for Delyn also referred to the National Rivers Authority. He must remember that Labour Members never opposed the establishment of that authority. From the outset we have accepted that it is right that the roles of poacher and gamekeeper should be separated. We have said, however—and we shall say it again tomorrow—that if the Government are serious about the NRA, they should give it the powers to carry out the functions for which it is being established. We know that steps are already being taken to remove the ability of the NRA to prosecute water authorities for sewage pollution once privatisation takes place and that there will be derogations and exemptions. Already, the Government are trying to remove the authority's teeth.

The hon. Member for Delyn also referred to investment and said that the last Labour Government reduced investment. I have never denied that. Like the Minister and other Conservative Members, however, he failed to point out that as the Government have been in office for 10 years they must accept responsibility for the fact that investment in the water industry, in real terms, is still only two thirds what it was in the mid-1970s.

The Government must also accept that the Select Committee on the Environment proposed a National Rivers Authority and referred to the investment problems mentioned by the hon. Member for Delyn and the clash with the public sector borrowing requirement. The Select Committee suggested changing the borrowing powers of the water industry and allowing it to remain in the public sector. Both the developments that the hon. Member for Delyn regards as important—establishing a National Rivers Authority, and changing the way in which we finance it—could thus have been achieved if the industry had been allowed to remain in the public sector. That would have gained our support because we believe it to be the right way forward. After the many hours of debate on the Bill, it is clear that changing the ownership of the industry will not solve its problems, but that investment in it will. If the Government were prepared to put in the investment to deal with the problems of drinking water quality, river pollution, sewage works and beach pollution, those problems could be solved.

Instead, the Government are considering a long sea outfall at Rossall point at Fleetwood. It is outrageous that the Government believe that long sea outfalls are the right way to deal with sea pollution in 1989 when we should be moving towards constructions that will serve the country well into the 21st century. It is wrong that in 1989 the Government still believe that long sea outfalls are the answer. They simply shift the pollution a little further out to sea, but it will still be washed back on to our shores. That is not an acceptable solution for the next century.

Later this afternoon we shall discuss amendments dealing with land. As my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has said, who would want to buy the North West water authority with the River Mersey and all its problems? The only attraction of buying that water authority lies in selling off its land to make money while removing access to the countryside and the free rights over the land that people enjoy at present.

I have raised the question of appointing a land development officer with the North West water authority, and in questions to the Minister. Brian Alexander the managing director of that authority and its acting chief executive—its former chief executive, who was also its deputy chairman, has been retired, neatly removed, because he opposed privatisation—has replied:

"The appointee's role is to look at surplus land to see what development opportunities there may be and, to ensure that we obtain the maximum returns possible from these possibilities."

The next sentence refers to the need

"to ensure that we get the best returns from surplus land."

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have listened with interest to the hon. Gentleman's speech, which is partly a Second Reading speech and partly more appropriate to Committee stage but the hon. Gentleman is not addressing his mind or his speech to the timetable motion. Is it not time that somebody intervened——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I have heard nothing out of order from the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike).

Mr. Pike: I have been following the arguments of other hon. Members who have spoken. This is one of the important issues that we shall not be able to debate sufficiently because we have only an hour and a half on this important principle.

Many organisations, such as the Ramblers Association, anglers' associations, and many others, are still extremely fearful about the consequences of the legislation.

Tomorrow we shall discuss sewage treatment works and the problems of pollution entering the rivers because the use of storm overflows is exceeding consent and they are being used on too many occasions. We need time to debate such problems, but the Government are afraid to debate them because they know that they are responsible for the present position and that they must accept——

It being one hour after commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to order [6 February.]*

The House divided: Ayes 285, Noes 168.

Division No. 271] **[4.34 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Aitken, Jonathan	Amess, David
Alexander, Richard	Amos, Alan

Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry

Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Water Bill

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY]

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 2

REGIONAL RIVERS ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 34, after "committees" insert,

"consisting of persons who are not members of the Authority,"

4.47 pm

The Minister for Water and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 2, 146 and 147.

Mr. Howard: The amendments are concerned with the membership of the National Rivers Authority's three regional committees—the rivers advisory committee, the flood defence committee and the fisheries advisory committee—and ensure that the membership of the NRA board will not overlap with the membership of those committees.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 2 agreed to.

Clause 4

TRANSFER OF THE WATER AUTHORITIES' FUNCTIONS ETC.

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 4, line 10, leave out subsections (2) and (3) and insert—

"(3) The Secretary of State shall, by order made before the transfer date, nominate a company in relation to each water authority as that authority's successor company; but a company shall not be so nominated unless it is a limited company and, at the time when the order is made, is wholly owned by the Crown."

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 7 to 9, 11, 12, 36, 37, 56, 60, 61, 65 to 74, 78, 81 to 85, 88, 97, 98, 128, 129, 133, 137 to 144, 153, 154, 162 to 165, 167 to 170, 173 to 175, 179 to 181, 185, 186, 189, 191, 192, 206, 207, 211, 212, 229 to 232, 241 to 248, 278 to 282, 284, 287 to 289, 291, 292, 294, 297 to 301, 303 to 311, 313 to 316, 321, 322, 324 to 333, 335 to 341.

Mr. Howard: The amendments in this group are purely technical. I am sure that the House would not wish me to dwell on them, although I should be happy to answer any points which hon. Members might wish to raise.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 6

CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEES

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 5, line 20, leave out subsection (1).

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 5 and 6.

Mr. Howard: The purpose of the amendments is to make it absolutely clear that it is a duty of the director general to establish and maintain customer service committees and to allocate companies to those committees. I commend the amendments to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 5 to 9 agreed to.

Clause 7

GENERAL DUTIES WITH RESPECT TO WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE SERVICES

Lords amendment: No. 10, in page 6, line 33, leave out "or 71" and insert

", 71 or *(duty to move pipes etc, in certain cases)*

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 161.

Mr. Howard: This new clause, after clause 155 and the consequential amendment to clause 7, will require a water and sewerage undertaker to alter or to remove its pipes in response to a reasonable request by any person with an interest in the land where the pipe is installed or adjacent land. The person may require the pipes to be altered or moved if that is necessary to develop the land in question. The new clause therefore goes a long way to ensuring that the presence of undertakers' pipes on private land does not unreasonably hinder development. An undertaker will be able to recover from the person any expenses reasonably incurred in carrying out the works involved. I commend the amendment to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords Amendments Nos. 11 and 12 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 13, in page 7, line 12, after "particular," insert

"that the interests of customers and potential customers in rural areas are so protected and"

Read a Second time.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a), to leave out second 'and' and insert

'such that charges for domestic consumers are at the same level for the same level of service throughout the area supplied or serviced by any undertaker, and'.

As I understand it, Lords amendment No. 13 is a concession which arises from the debate in another place when some of my noble Friends and also some Conservative peers expressed concern about the possibility of differential charging for rural consumers. An amendment was moved in the other place and lost by only two votes. It would have ensured that charges to consumers in rural areas were the same as those for consumers in urban areas. The amendment, which was so narrowly lost, is similar in terms to amendment (a).

Amendment No. 13 falls short of ensuring that prices will be standard in any one area, merely placing the director general under a duty to take account of the interests of rural consumers when assessing whether there has been any undue discrimination between consumers in a proposed charging scheme by an undertaker. The words "take account" are not strong enough to guarantee that the interests of rural consumers or other consumers are properly safeguarded.

Ministers in another place repeated pledges given to us in Committee that there should be no discrimination at all against one type of consumer, be it a rural consumer or any other consumer. The Minister made it clear, however, that the present concession in amendment No. 13 did not represent a standard charge for a standard level of service —hence our amendment (a) to tighten the matter up and to ensure that the principle of equity is followed in the charging policy.

Opposition Members believe that the supply of water and the disposal of sewage is important not only for individuals and families but for all of us. It is in everyone's interests that we should all have proper services, for obvious public health reasons, and it is particularly important to establish principles of fairness in charging. We know what is likely to happen to prices generally as a result of privatisation. Everyone, except Ministers speaking in public—I suspect that some are franker when speaking in private—accepts that prices will rise as a result of privatisation.

Ministers have often sought to give assurances about what will happen to prices following privatisation. For example, we have been told that the Director General of Water Services will decide everything and will look after the consumer, and that the new theory of comparative competition will ensure that the consumer gets a fair bill. I should happily give way to the junior Minister—the Minister with responsibility for sport—were he here, so that he could give us another entertaining session. His struggles to define the theory of comparative competition are about as convincing as the Secretary of State's assurances that prices will rise no more than 7·5 per cent. to 12·5 per cent. by the end of the century. That is what the Secretary of State told us last year on Second Reading.

Of course, that was before we had the latest round of increases in water authority charges—increases that averaged 10 per cent., in many instances, concealing much higher increases. For example, in Yorkshire not only was the average increase nearly 33 per cent. higher than that, which was hard to disguise, but the balance of charging is changing in many water authority areas. Those with a lower rateable value property have seen increases far higher than those with high rateable values. As in Yorkshire, there have been additional increases—increases in standing charges of about 33 per cent. It is easy to see where the sting is and where the real hardship will be caused because of the increases already in the pipeline.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Has my hon. Friend seen recent reports in the Isle of Wight, where bills are now being delivered as a result of metering tests being conducted there and elsewhere? Bills that are two, three and four times the previous size are now hitting the doormats. It is a pity that the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), who intervened in a vitriolic and trivial way, is not present to explain that to his constituents.

Mrs. Taylor: The whole House would have enjoyed the comments of the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) explaining the impact of metering in his constituency. All the information on metering that we

have had so far shows that we were right to move our amendment in Committee, saying that there should be no compulsory metering of anybody's property. The metering experiments currently taking place do not take account of all the heavy fixed charges associated with metering. Many people are in for a severe shock when they realise what they will have to pay if metering is introduced.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The hon. Lady mentioned the substantially increased charges that may be incurred through the introduction of metering. Given that the legislation has stated that there is a responsibility for charges to reflect costs, is there not a real danger that if an authority decides to have cost centres which subdivide its area, areas with the highest costs will lead to a higher charge? That is the very reason why we need the amendment.

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) is quite right. That is one of the dangers of the legislation and the proposals on how things will work after privatisation. There is also the possibility that investment will not take place in areas which have the greatest problems. That could also affect the level of later charges and discrimination in charges.

I am glad that the Minister for Water and Planning is here to reply to the debate. During the earlier part of the year we had a most entertaining few weeks with the Minister telling us—with as near straight a face as he could manage—that he was appalled by the increases in water charges being proposed by statutory water companies. He firmly told us that he intended to stop them, that he would lay down the law and act the bully to tell statutory water companies what they should do. As it worked out, meetings took place and the Minister saw some of the chairmen of the statutory water companies. They not only told him where to get off but they clearly told the public that the severity of the price increases that they were imposing was a straightforward result of the privatisation proposals. Far from the water companies being savaged by the Minister, we saw the Minister squirming in his attempt to prove that increases of up to 42 per cent. could have been even worse but for his intervention. It is no wonder that the Prime Minister has said that the matter has been badly dealt with.

Mr. Howard: Is it because the hon. Lady thought that the increases levied by the statutory water companies were so admirable that her party voted for them to be the model for privatisation in another place?

5 pm

Mrs. Taylor: The Minister well knows that what was said in another place was that that was not our preferred option. It would, however, have meant the end of the privatisation proposals. We made no bones about the fact that we did not like the proposal, but anything that would have scuppered the Bill was worthy of support.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): That is an interesting question which we should look into further. Does not the very ease with which the statutory water companies put up their charges prove that that is not a model that we should follow, whatever our views on the rightness or wrongness of the Bill? Will the hon. Lady comment on that?

Mrs. Taylor: It is not the ideal model to follow, but the reason why the statutory water companies put up their prices by such significant amounts was the reason that they made clear to their consumers and to the public. It was because of the consequences of the Government's privatisation proposals. It is clear that what has happened with the statutory water companies so far this year will happen to other water consumers as time goes by if the water authorities are pushed into the private sector.

It is important to have that background to the starting point of prices in the water industry. We have seen significant increases this year, but there is far worse to come for all of us as water consumers. One reason why the amendment is important is that it will ensure at least some fairness in the treatment of consumers.

One interesting aspect of working on the Bill during the last year has been the amount of interest in the legislation from many different quarters. That is why, when it comes to estimating the impact of the legislation or its cost, we have an impressive array of advice, some of which my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has quoted. One recent report on the financial impact of privatisation which I recommend to hon. Members has been prepared by an independent expert—an accountant—who has worked in the industry for many years. Mr. Stanley William Hill's work, which has been widely acknowledged by the City and financial journalists, shows clearly that the cost of privatisation alone will add at least 27 per cent. to water charges across the board immediately on privatisation.

That cost includes several items that outraged the public, not least the completely inept and ridiculously expensive advertising campaign upon which, at the Government's insistence, the water authorities have embarked. It is outrageous for Ministers still to claim that that water advertising campaign has nothing to do with them. I do not believe that one person in the country would accept as a coincidence the fact that the water authorities have spent as much in one four-week period on television advertising as Coca-Cola, Nescafé and Renault together—what a coincidence that that should happen just when the Government are putting through their privatisation proposals.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): It is our money.

Mrs. Taylor: As my hon. Friend said, it is our money. At the moment, the water authorities are still in the public sector. Yet they are behaving as though they were answerable to shareholders and as though they might sell more water as a result of their advertisements.

Mr. Hill's estimate ties in very much with other estimates which have been given in another place. The Conservative peer, Lord Nugent, estimated that the first year increases in prices as a result of privatisation would be between 30 and 40 per cent. That was the estimate of a Conservative peer, not of any Labour spokesman. All that is before we take into account the costs of investment to improve the service, whether as a result of EEC directives, which we shall be discussing later, or of the backlog of problems and liabilities being faced by the industry.

The backcloth of prices is not optimistic. The increases that we shall be facing may fall more harshly on certain types of consumer. I have mentioned the pricing policy adopted this year by Yorkshire Water. There are also the

[Mrs. Taylor]

problems with metering and the possibility of discrimination against rural consumers or, indeed, any consumers in high-cost areas. Those may include regions which have a large backlog of liabilities and may be forced to pay disproportionately for improvements within their areas.

The Minister could tell us a lot about pricing post-privatisation. I expect that we shall get all the critical announcements on prices once the legislation has gone through and, possibly, only once the House has risen for the summer recess. The Minister could tell us now the basis for K for the next 10 years if he chose to do so. All the discussions have taken place and recommendations have been made and discussed with the existing water authorities. I hope that the Minister will be forthcoming during our debate and tell us what the likely levels of K will be. We spent some time in Committee talking about K, but I hope that the Minister will tell us more about how cost pass-through will operate, because that is just as important. As the Bill is written, and as we have discussed it on several occasions, cost pass-through should be allowed only for new and unforeseen circumstances, not for existing liabilities which have not been met. Yet in an answer to me recently the Minister made it clear that the Director General of Water Services could take into account with regard to cost pass-through our existing commitments to the EEC, simply because those liabilities have not yet been budgeted or accounted for and plans have not been made. That would be an abuse of cost pass-through, but I believe that the Government are looking to move in that direction to disguise the real level of K that is necessary to go ahead with the Government's plans.

One other issue that I hope the Minister will deal with is very relevant to the amendment that he will be moving, because it concerns potential consumers. Amendment No. 13 refers to existing and potential consumers. I hope that the Minister will tell us a little more about his plans for the connection charge for water services after privatisation. On 11 May, after the Bill had left the House, the Minister announced that a new scheme of connection charges was to be drawn up. That is a completely new scheme which has not been discussed in the House. We have not as yet seen the full details of the scheme, and we do not know —nor do the builders involved know—when payments will have to be made, whether they will have to be made when the builder applies for a service for a particular site or after the houses have been built. I hope that the Minister will tell us what the likely connection charges will be. In the initial statement, it was said that the connection charge would be about £800 on average, but investigations have shown that some water authorities are thinking of charging an average of about £2,000, or even more in certain circumstances. That would obviously have an impact either on the price of housing or on the production of houses, if builders found it difficult to absorb that cost.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): I think that the hon. Lady is in danger of misinforming the House. We discussed the scheme in Committee because I tabled and moved an amendment bearing on it. The hon. Lady is clearly right to say that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister did not put the scheme forward to take account of her argument. Does she agree that it is fair that the developer, rather than existing water consumers, should pay a one-off charge to cover capital costs?

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman said that I was wrong to suggest that the scheme had not been discussed. He then acknowledged that I was right to suggest that it had not been discussed. I accept that he raised the issue in Committee, but at that stage—not surprisingly—the Minister chose not to give us any information. Instead, he held a press conference, or issued a press release, at a later stage. I cannot talk about the details of the scheme because the Minister has not been forthcoming with the details. I am only asking the Minister, for once, to clarify what he is proposing. People who are not necessarily the natural allies of the Labour party—for instance, the Building Employers Confederation—are extremely worried about what the Minister is proposing and would like more information. Local authorities and housing associations which are still trying to build homes, despite the difficulties put in their way by the Government, would like to know what is to happen about connection charges. The Minister has said that there will be full consultation, but, as I understand it, there has been little consultation so far. Even the Building Employers Confederation is extremely worried about the Government's proposals.

Mr. Nicholas Baker *rose*——

Mrs. Taylor: No, I shall not give way. We are running short of time and I must get on.

I hope that the Minister will tell us whether the Government intend to add new sums to the local authorities' capital allocation programme and to the funding of housing associations to take account of the new costs which will fall especially heavily on first-time buyers and purchasers of small properties. If we are talking about £2,000 as an addition to the cost of a small terraced house in Yorkshire, that will be a significant proportion of the final price. I hope that the Minister can tell us that more money will be made available to local authorities if they are to be faced with costs of that kind.

The public are well aware that privatisation of the water industry is likely to lead to a reduction in standards and an increase in charges. All that has happened in the past year points in that direction, as does every financial survey and economic study of the industry. Privatisation will cost ordinary consumers a great deal of money. We want a water industry which is accountable to consumers, not one which is accountable to shareholders. I hope that the Minister will reconsider his position.

Mr. Howard: I invite the House to agree with Lords amendments Nos. 13 and 15 and to reject amendment (a). Before I explain the effect of the amendments which were passed in another place and the reasons why I think that it would be unwise to accept the Opposition's amendment, it is important that we all understand the context in which the amendments fall to be considered.

The unavoidable fact, much though the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) would like to avoid it and much though she wriggled in answer to my questions and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), is that when the Bill was being considered in another place the Opposition voted for the removal of all price control measures. It avails the Opposition nothing to pretend today to be the friend of

consumers when they voted in another place for the removal of the price control measures which afford consumers safeguards for the pricing of water and for the circumstances in which services are to be provided by the new water companies from which consumers will benefit greatly.

5.15 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor: The Minister is coming up with a remarkable answer to what happened in another place. Had the relevant amendment secured a majority in that place, the Government would have been defeated and would have dropped the Bill. I can think of no better service to consumers than to kill the entire Bill.

Mr. Howard: I do not know how the hon. Lady can speculate on what the Government's reaction would have been if the amendment had been passed. It is clear from what she has said that, if there is any hope of defeating the Government in a Division, any protection for the consumer will go out of the window along with any sensible measure of price control. Apparently the Opposition will vote for anything if they think that it will lead to some embarrassment for the Government. That is a scandalous admission. It says more about the irresponsibility of the Labour party than volumes of pretended concern for consumers who will be anxious to obtain the services of the industry under the improved terms and conditions that will result from the Bill.

I turn to the amendments. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the Director General of Water Services have a general duty under clause 7(3)(a) to use their regulatory powers under part I of chapter II so as to ensure that customers' interests in respect of charges are protected and that, in particular, there is no undue discrimination or undue preference shown by undertakers in fixing charges. That duty already provides the basis for a robust framework of consumer protection. Amendment No. 13 supplements the duty by requiring that, in particular, the interests of customers in rural areas are to be protected.

Mr. Wigley: As I said in an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), under this Bill a company could reasonably argue that it was not discriminating against rural areas if the ratio of the cost of provision of service to the charge was the same in a rural area as in an urban area. That could lead to a gross difference in the charges being levied. Will the Minister apply himself to that?

Mr. Howard: The point of amendment No. 13 is that, should any company come forward with any proposition of that sort in future, the director general would have to consider it against the general duty to prevent discrimination. I understand the hon. Gentleman's argument that, in the way in which he formulated the approach, the general duty to prevent discrimination conceivably might not be enough to defeat such a proposition. The effect of the amendment is that the director general will have a duty, in addition, to protect the interest of rural consumers. It is against that background that any proposition of the sort referred to by the hon. Gentleman would have to be considered. A direct consequence of the amendment is a substantial additional reinforcement for consumers in rural areas. I have no doubt that it would be regarded as especially relevant by the director general in the context of any approach such as that to which the hon. Gentleman has referred.

Amendment No. 15 would require the Secretary of State and the director general, in the exercise of their duty, to protect customers under clause 7 and to take into account the particular interests of those who are disabled or of pensionable age in respect of the quality of any services provided by a company in the course of carrying out the functions of a water or sewerage undertaker. I commend the amendments to the House.

Amendment (a), which has been tabled by the Labour party, would add a further gloss to amendment No. 13. It would require my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the director general, when carrying out their duties under clause 7, to ensure that charges for domestic customers in rural areas are at the same level for the same level of service throughout the area supplied or serviced by any undertaker.

The amendment is both defective and undesirable. What does the same charge for the same level of service actually mean? Does it mean that every customer who receives the same quantity of water at the same pressure should pay the same charge? If so, the water industry would have to introduce very quickly an elaborate water metering system to measure both volume and pressure, in addition to an equally elaborate tariff. The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), with his usual perspicacity, no doubt appreciates the force of that point. At the other extreme, does the phrase mean that undertakers would have to introduce a flat-rate, unmeasured charging system for all their domestic customers, regardless of the consumption of each customer?

The Opposition's amendment could have an adverse effect on many customers of water authorities that have adopted a policy of differential charging to alleviate the impact of the anomalies of the domestic rating system. To take just one example, Thames Water makes a rateable value-based sewerage charge at 8·9p per pound of rateable value in the inner area of north London but 19·5p per pound in its western division. That difference of 119 per cent. is intended to allow for the differences in rateable values of similar properties in the two areas to ensure that broadly comparable bills will result. That might well fall foul of amendment (a). The thinking behind amendment (a) is characteristically confused. It would be unworkable and it would not lead to the result that I think the hon. Member for Dewsbury intended.

The hon. Lady raised a number of other matters, with which I shall deal briefly. She referred to some of the consequences of metering, but she knows that metering is not a consequence of either this legislation or of privatisation. It is necessary that water undertakers devise an alternative method of charging for water services on the abolition of domestic rateable values. They have been given up to the year 2000 to come up with an alternative method. Many may wish to consider metering. Indeed, we introduced metering trials because we thought it important that the undertakers should have the advantage of such experience before reaching decisions.

The correspondence pages of newspapers have disclosed widely differing experiences. Many people think metering to be an excellent system, while others have reservations. I do not doubt that the undertakers will

[Mr. Howard]

carefully consider the results of those trials before reaching any final decisions about an alternative method of charging.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: If the Minister accepts that there are differences of opinion on the benefits or otherwise of metering, why did he turn down our amendment to ensure that there was no compulsory metering?

Mr. Howard: At the end of the day, the undertakers will have to decide upon an alternative method of charging to the current system, which is based on domestic rateable values. They might decide that metering is the fairest and most sensible system to adopt and they would then need powers to introduce compulsory metering in their areas. That is such an obvious point that I am astonished that the hon. Lady questioned it.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Water authorities already have the necessary powers to introduce compulsory water metering; they were introduced in the paving legislation. Water authorities, such as the North-West water authority, are using those powers for new dwellings.

Mr. Howard: It is true that the undertakers can already use those powers, and they are sensibly doing so for new dwellings. However, they will want to consider the results of the trials before deciding whether metering should be introduced compulsorily throughout the whole of their areas.

Mr. Mullin: The Minister speaks of metering as though it were an academic exercise. In fact, metering has been introduced in a dozen or so areas and the bills are now hitting the doormats. We do not need to speculate: we know that many people are receiving bills two, three or four times higher than their previous bills. How does that square with the Minister's repeated assurances in Committee about the legislation's effect on prices?

Mr. Howard: As I have already said, metering is not a consequence of privatisation; it is an alternative method of charging to that based on domestic rateable value, which is being abolished. Experimental metering is taking place in several parts of the country and we shall benefit from the experience. It is by no means self-evident that water should be treated differently from food, for example, which is paid for on the basis of the amount consumed. Opposition Members appear to regard it as absolutely self-evident that there should be a system of charging for each and every commodity that has absolutely nothing to do with the amount consumed. There is no self-evident rule of law, justice or morals that suggests that people should not pay for such commodities according to the quantities consumed, provided that proper arrangements are made for the least-well-off members of the community. Such arrangements should be made through the social security system and not through some arbitrary method of charging that does not attempt to correlate use and cost.

The hon. Lady referred to some estimates of the likely effect of water privatisation on the prices charged. The estimates are erroneous—as the hon. Lady will realise, no doubt to her acute disappointment, when the prices are announced. She will have to wait a little longer before being given that information.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: What about cost pass-through?

Mr. Howard: Costs will not simply be arbitrarily shifted to cost pass-through. The arrangements for cost pass-through are set out in detail in the licence, which has been available in the Library for some days. It is clear that it is not possible for cost pass-through to be used to deal with matters that were foreseeable from the outset. In some instances the obligation will not have been foreseeable. In some instances, no doubt, the cost of meeting the obligation will not have been foreseeable. Both cost pass-through and benefit pass-through—the mechanism that will give to the companies and their customers a proportion of the proceeds from the disposal of their assets—are intended to deal with unforeseen circumstances. The detailed provisions for that are set out in the draft licence.

The hon. Lady's final point related to connection charges. The introduction of that measure was a typical example of what I referred to during my speech in the guillotine debate earlier—of the Government listening to reasonable and sensible amendments put forward while the Bill was proceeding through Parliament. It was not the Government's intention to introduce that measure, but the arguments put forward in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) and others of my hon. Friends were so sensible that I was persuaded that it would improve the Bill.

One of my most enjoyable memories of the Committee stage was the sight of the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael)—the leading Opposition spokesman—in a state of exquisite equivocation as he wondered what on earth to say in response to the sensible proposals put forward by my hon. Friends. The hon. Gentleman could not decide what to say or what to do. His was a remarkable speech in a remarkable Committee. We have set out our responses and conclusions, and we are holding consultations before the detailed regulatory arrangements are finalised. We shall of course take into account the views of bodies such as the House-Builders Federation that have a direct interest before final regulations are made.

I invite the House to reject the Opposition's amendment as being undesirable and unworkable, and I commend Lords amendments Nos. 13 and 15.

5.30 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): In his opening remarks, the Minister charged the House—as though addressing a recalcitrant and incredulous jury—that it should take into account the context in which the Lords amendments fall to be considered. My right hon. and hon. Friends want to take the context into account, because it is one in which the City of London has given water privatisation what one respected financial columnist described over the weekend as a "thumbs down". That is the context in which we should consider the Lords amendments and the Minister's rejection of the Opposition amendment to protect and to preserve equity as between the rural and the urban consumer. The Government have brought forward their own sham amendments relating to pricing because they know that the share issue can be successful only if the Government create a situation in which the water industry can exploit its monopoly control over prices to make the flotation attractive to prospective investors.

It is worth while considering the state in which the Government find themselves in relation to their friends in the City. A recent survey by Harris revealed that 59 per cent. of fund managers believe that the domestic water industry should not be privatised before it meets European standards. More than half the fund managers polled expect the dividend yield to exceed 7 per cent., which compares with a current average equity yield of only 4·4 per cent. Meanwhile, 91 per cent. of respondents to the Harris poll have not even set aside specific funds to invest in water. That is the context in which the Lords amendments are presented by the Government and in which they oppose our amendment. The Government are in a blind funk.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): A blind what?

Mr. Boateng: The hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) mutters and moans in his usual sedentary and stultifying manner. I repeat that Government Members are in a blind funk over what will happen when the water industry is privatised and they seek to float that offer. They do not know what is about to hit them. In their desperation they attempt to preserve a pricing mechanism that will maximise the yield to shareholders.

The great mischief and evil about the Bill is the way in which, in a natural monopoly, it sets the shareholder against the consumer. The Bill creates a situation in which consumer interests in respect of health, safety and water quality will be subordinated to the greed and avarice of shareholders.

Mr. Leigh: Nonsense.

Mr. Boateng: It is no use the hon. Gentleman shouting "Nonsense" because I have described the reality of the position. The Government's amendments are designed to avoid the fiasco that is in store for them.

The Minister can take one crumb of comfort from the Harris opinion poll. I suspect from the glimmer of recognition in his eyes, which those of us who served in Committee came to know all too well, that he has been feasting on that crumb—as well he might. The crumb is that when people were asked to identify the politician responsible for water privatisation, 18 per cent. identified the Secretary of State for the Environment, and only 3 per cent. identified the Minister for Water and Planning. That must be a great comfort to him—certain, as he must be, that his vocation and the Bill are an unmitigated disaster. Only 3 per cent. of the population will blame the Minister, but unfortunately for him it is not the people of this country who will determine his fate in the near future—although they may do so in the medium term. It is her upstairs who will determine the Minister's fate, and she has both him and the Secretary of State for the Environment well in her sights because of the consequences of the disastrous privatisation of the water industry.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman feels better now that he has got that little joke off his chest. The hon. Gentleman referred to a lack of a sense of identity as between shareholders and consumers. How much sense of identity was there between the public authorities, with the Labour Government behind them, and consumers when water prices were bumped up by 40 per cent. in a single year in the 1970s? Is the official view that he is peddling today that the water industry will be unsaleable because its prices are too low, or saleable because its prices will be too high? It is impossible even for the hon. Gentleman to sustain both propositions.

Mr. Boateng: As the hon. Gentleman knows only too well, the gap between water prices and the retail price index has increased dramatically under the present Government, whereas under the previous Labour Government it closed. The hon. Gentleman makes an entirely spurious argument.

On the basis of what occurred in Committee and in another place, and of today's proceedings, consumers are right to be fearful of the fact that hidden within factor K is a remedy for increased prices. Factor K gives those who want to acquire the water industry the ability to boost profits, pass on any unforeseen costs, and avoid any risk that might otherwise arise in meeting required European standards. Built into the Government's proposals are practices that are discriminatory as between the urban and rural consumer and that will exploit the water companies' monopoly at every turn. The public know of that, which is why they are overwhelmingly opposed to water privatisation and to the pricing mechanism that the Government try to defend.

Only this morning I received a letter

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I know that my hon. Friend is about to say that this morning he received a letter from the chair of a water authority. Is my hon. Friend aware that over the past five years river and sewage pollution in Yorkshire has doubled, yet the chair of Yorkshire Water spends taxpayers' money hand over fist on advertisements that have got up my constituents' noses? Everyone who has written to me is outraged about the doubling of pollution.

Mr. Boateng: My hon. Friend has put her finger on the speciousness of the propaganda put out by the chairmen of the water authorities. The letter that I received today from the chairman of Thames Water contained the usual series of anodyne points seeking to justify the unjustifiable—and, one is bound to add, to obscure the truth, which is that there is no way in which consumers will benefit from the sale.

One of the Government's proposals for the price mechanism attempts to buttress the advice already seized upon by Warburg Securities, the Government's broking adviser. Of course, the Government must work hand in hand with the brokers, who are the only people likely to benefit from privatisation. The main selling point for shares that already seem

"to have been condemned to slow profit growth"

is that

"'stable and, probably, highly in elastic demand allied to rising prices make the revenue characteristics of the industry extremely attractive,' says Warburg, making the best of a difficult task."

It is a difficult task, but one thing that we know for certain is that it will be made even more difficult for the consumer who will have to meet the rising prices.

The chairmen of the water authorities have not always spoken with quite the pleasant, reasonable voice with which they purport to speak in the letter. I cannot but refer to the position in the north-west, and to a report that appeared in *The Independent* on 22 May, headed

"Where there's mucky water there may be investors' brass".

[Mr. Boateng]

That has a familiar ring, when we think of the muck and the worms that now infest our water.

What the chairman of Thames Water says is interesting and worthy of consideration. According to *The Independent*,

"one water authority chairman described it"—

the flotation and purchase of shares in water—

"as better than a gilt because it will be inflation-proof, with a little bit of sparkle and risk added by the diversification opportunities—'like safe sex'."

The mind boggles. That we should have sunk to such depths that chairmen of public bodies describe share flotations in terms of safe sex! It raises the spectre of Messrs Howard and Ridley as the Masters and Johnson of water privatisation. They are trying to sell the unsellable, and, whenever possible, to exploit the consumer for the benefit of the shareholder. We shall oppose them at every turn.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: We heard a good deal from the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) in Committee, and were vastly amused by most of what he had to say—especially the bits that related to opera, which constituted the greater part of his speeches. Today, however, he finally told us his real concern, which is not for the consumer but for the shareholder.

The hon. Gentleman gave away the secret at the start of his excellent speech by expressing anxiety about the report that the Bill had received a thumbs-down from the City. It is a bit early for him to worry—the industry has not yet been privatised, so there is hope for his children sitting in the car park about which we heard so much. I advise him to go for the shares when they eventually appear.

5.45 pm

Lords amendment No. 13, which I welcome, is about consumers. We have heard remarkably little from Opposition Members about the consumer's interests. We have not even heard that the director general is to control prices, although that is surely one of the greatest consumer measures ever devised.

My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned another consumer measure—the connection charge. As he kindly said, my hon. Friends and I suggested that in Committee, but apparently the Opposition were not listening at that point. The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) got into some difficulties in his speech—it is a great pleasure to see the hon. Gentleman in his place now—because he did not realise that the connection charge was a consumer measure. It is a one-off charge to be paid by developers on new properties to cover the capital costs of water and sewerage services. I will anticipate the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), who has a pencil ready to write down her question. The price will come out of the land. If the hon. Lady talks to developers, that is the answer that she will hear from them.

Mrs. Ann Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Baker: Perhaps the hon. Lady will allow me to finish as there is not much time.

It is existing consumers who will benefit from the connection charge, and it is right that they should not pay extra capital costs from new developments in their areas, and that the charge should be paid from the new land, with its inflated building costs. The measure will also replace the section 52 agreements arrived at by many local authorities, and will end uncertainty and some of the less desirable deals done by local authorities and developers involving new capital costs. I therefore reject amendment (a) and reiterate my support, and that of my hon. Friends, for Lords amendment No. 13 which, like so many of the Government's amendments to the Bill, is a consumer-friendly measure.

Mr. Allan Roberts: This has been a wide-ranging debate. The Minister has accused Labour Members in the other place of voting against measures designed to protect the consumer, but that is not possible as there are no such measures in the Bill. The powers of the Director General of Water Services are such that the consumer will be far from protected.

The party of so-called choice is introducing compulsory metering. In Committee, Conservative Members said that they wanted metering. They can have meters now. Metering is not compulsory, so if people choose to have water meters there is nothing wrong with that.

The Minister claims that the likelihood of the introduction of compulsory water metering in many areas has nothing whatever to do with privatisation. He believes that that exonerates the Government from blame. But it has everything to do with the poll tax legislation. If rateable values are abolished by the poll tax legislation, another means of charging has to be found. When compulsory water meters are installed in every home—at a capital cost of £1·6 billion—that will be a good way of providing the private water companies with a licence to print money. The compulsory water meter, which is a direct consequence of the poll tax legislation, is thoroughly unfair, switching the burden of taxation from the rich to the poor, who will be charged for the amount of water that they use.

The Minister extols that fact as a virtue, but the cost of water bears no relation to the amount that is used. Unlike electricity, which is expensive to produce but cheap to distribute, water is cheap to produce but expensive to distribute. As soon as the infrastructure is paid for and the pipes are there to take water to households, people can use twice as much water without it costing the water companies twice as much. The extra cost is negligible. It is the cost of getting the water there in the first place that is the problem. If people economise and use half as much water as their next door neighbours, the water companies will not save half the cost. Once the pipe has been laid and the water provided, the cost has already been met. There are no savings to be made by water metering. If the Government are concerned about economising and getting people to think about saving water, they should do something about the 20 to 30 per cent. of water which is leaking out of an aging system. That is the amount of water that leaves the reservoirs but never reaches people's taps because the system is out of date. The £1·6 billion capital cost of installing meters would be better spent on mending an aging leaking system so that water is no longer wasted.

Water metering is a tax on bath time. Large families will be reluctant to use water to bath their children as often as they should so as to cut down their water bills. The elderly, who already economise on electricity and other forms of energy for heating their homes because they are worried

about the size of their bills, will economise on the use of water as well. They will be reluctant to flush the loo or to bath as often as they would like.

If compulsory water metering is not introduced, the alternative is a water poll tax. That is the prospect that the Government are offering in this Bill, which they say shows their concern for the consumer. There will be a flat rate water charge—another shifting of the burden of costs and taxation from the rich to the poor. North-West Water is determined to introduce compulsory water metering for all industrial and commercial users immediately after privatisation. It is already determined to compel any new dwelling to have a water meter, and it has made plans for the compulsory fitting of water meters over a period of years throughout the whole of its area. North-West Water is not concerned about the consumer. There will be an army of meter readers. Huge capital expenditure will be involved, which will lead to a tax on the use of water—a tax on cleanliness and a switch in the burden of taxation from rich to poor.

With the 27 per cent. price increase that all independent experts have calculated is likely after privatisation, we shall have the Government's disgraceful cut-off regime. The policy statements by the Department of the Environment on disconnections and guaranteed standards of service by private water companies are also a disgrace. The water industry clearly expects an increase in the number of disconnections from the domestic water supply. That is how much the Government care about the consumer. Last year, 9,000 people supplied by water authorities and 6,000 supplied by water companies had their water supply disconnected. The Labour party believes that water disconnection should never be necessary. Water is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of the nation. Giving privately owned monopolies wider scope and greater powers to disconnect customers who have difficulty paying for their water has no place in a civilised society. Yet that is what the Government and the Ministers are proposing. According to their revised code of practice, people on low incomes with a history of payment difficulties will be legally discriminated against. Their case will not be heard in the county courts. It is essential that every water consumer should at least have the option of a county court hearing to explain the circumstances of non-payment.

The Bill ought to provide much stronger safeguards for the sick and the disabled who are large users of water. Payment by instalments should be an option for every water consumer, not just those with payment difficulties. It is outrageous that the provisions were drafted by the industry and the Government without consulting consumer organisations. Privatisation of the water industry is already leading to huge price increases, which will inevitably lead to financial hardship for many consumers and to the likelihood of more people on low incomes being denied access to a domestic water supply. The prospects for families with children, for the disabled and for the elderly are horrendous. The social and health consequences of water supplies being cut off are so great that in many areas the Government are putting at risk the health and the wellbeing of whole communities. It is amazing that the Government are so callous about their cut-off regime and about the potential difficulties that people will face in paying their water bills as a result at having to meet the costs of privatisation and water metering.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Does my hon. Friend recall that we were able to produce water bills in the Sheffield area which proved that 67 per cent. of the water charges for single pensioners were not for water but for water metering? The Minister referred to the payment of welfare benefit, but I recall the Department of Social Security saying that there would be no financial help to meet water bills.

Mr. Roberts: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Our concern for people in such difficulties is clear. The Government's lack of concern is equally clear. They claim that this is an environmental measure because it will release water authorities from the constraints of the public sector borrowing requirement, but that can be done at a stroke anyway. Privatisation is not needed for water authorities to be able to borrow on the open market. One can imagine what will happen after flotation. During the lunch break at the Stock Exchange, the developers, the speculators and others in the City will be saying, "What shall we invest our money in today to make a quick buck or a long-term gain? Let us invest in the problems of cleaning up the river Mersey. Let us put our money into cleaning up Britain's bathing beaches and drinking water. We can borrow money on the open market as we are sure to make a packet out of it because it is very profitable."

My car broke down last week outside the House of Commons. It had a puncture. The police did not help me, so I got out and jacked up the car. I was about to take the wheel off when the Secretary of State for the Environment came by, opened the front door of my car and started to remove the radio. When I said, "What are you doing, mate?" he replied, "If you're having the wheels, I'm having the radio." Then the Prime Minister came along. She opened the bonnet of the car and was messing about underneath. The Secretary of State for the Environment and I asked, "What are you doing?" She replied, "Taking the water out of the radiator—you don't know how much this will cost very soon."

6 pm

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I wish briefly to pursue the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker). I agree with him absolutely that the cost of connection for new homes will ultimately have an impact on the value and cost of building land. Anything that can legitimately keep down the cost of building land must ultimately be to the benefit of the consumer, particularly first-time buyers, whom we must protect.

May I press my hon. and learned Friend the Minister a little further? If I heard the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) correctly, she said from the Dispatch Box that the cost of connection could well be some £2,000 per dwelling. As I understand it——

It being Six o'clock, Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the order this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

The House divided: Ayes 188, Noes 303.

Division No. 272] **[6 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Armstrong, Hilary
Allen, Graham	Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Anderson, Donald	Ashton, Joe
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard

Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded by Six o'clock.*

Lords amendment No. 13 agreed to.

Royal Assent

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Police Officers (Central Service) Act 1989.
Hearing Aid Council (Amendment) Act 1989.
Dock Work Act 1989.
Kingston upon Hull City Council Act 1989.
Tees (Newport) Bridge Act 1989.

Water Bill

Lords amendments again considered.

Lords amendment: No. 14, in page 7, line 19, at end insert—

—"( ) to ensure that the interests of every such person are further protected as respects benefits that could be secured for them by the application in a particular manner of any of the proceeds of a disposal (whether before, on or after the transfer date) of any of that company's protected land or of any interest or right in or over any of that land;"

Read a Second time.

6.15 pm

Dr. Cunningham: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a), in line 4, leave out 'any of the proceeds' and insert 'not less than fifty per cent of the proceeds'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take amendment (b) to the Lords amendment, in line 4, leave out 'any of the proceeds' and insert 'all of the proceeds'.

Lords amendments Nos. 41 to 43, 151 and 157.

Lords amendment No. 158, after clause 147, to insert the following new clause—*restriction on disposals of land*—

" .—(1) The Authority shall not dispose of any of its compulsorily acquired land, or of any interest or right in or over any of the land, except with the consent of, or in accordance with a general authorisation given by, the Secretary of State or the Minister.

(2) A company holding an appointment under Chapter I of Part II of this Act shall not dispose of any of its protected land, or of any interest or right in or over any of that land, except with the consent of, or in accordance with a general authorisation given by, the Secretary of State.

(3) A consent or authorisation for the purposes of this section shall be set out in a notice served by the Secretary of State or the Minister on the person who is or may be authorised, by virtue of the provision contained in the notice, to dispose of land or of interests or rights in or over land or, as the case may be, on every such person.

(4) A consent or authorisation for the purposes of this section may be given on such conditions as the Secretary of State or, as the case may be, the Minister considers appropriate.

(5) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (4) above and subject to subsection (6) below, the conditions of a consent or authorisation for the purposes of this section may include—

(a) a requirement that, before there is any disposal, an opportunity of acquiring the land in question, or an interest or right in or over that land, is to be made avaialbe, in such manner and on such terms as may be specified in or determined under provision contained in the notice setting out the consent or authorisation, to such person as may be so specified or determined;

(b) a requirement, in the case of a consent or authorisation for the purposes of subsection (2) above, that the company making the disposal has complied with such of the conditions of its appointment under Chapter I of Part II of this Act as relate to the disposal of its protected land or of any interest or right in or over that land;

(c) a requirement that such a company, before making a disposal in a case in which the land in question is situated in a National Park, in the Broads or in an area of outstanding natural beauty or special scientific interest, should do one or both of the following, that is to say—

(i) consult with the Countryside Commission and, in the case of an area of special scientific interest, with the Nature Conservancy Council; and

(ii) enter into such agreements under section 39 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (management agreements) or such convenants under subsection (7) below as the Secretary of State may determine;

(d) provision requiring determinations under or for the purposes of the consent or authorisation to be made, in such cases as are mentioned in paragraph (c) above, either by the Countryside Commission or only after consultation with that Commission.

(6) A consent or authorisation shall not be given on any such condition as is mentioned in subsection (5)(a) above except where the Secretary of State or the Minister is satisfied that the condition will have effect in relation only to—

(a) land which, or any interest or right in or over which, was acquired by—

(i) The Authority;

(ii) the water undertaker or sewerage undertaker in question; or

(iii) any predecessor of the Authority or undertaker,
either compulsorily or at a time when the Authority, undertaker or predecessor was authorised to acquire it compulsorily; or

(b) land situated in a National Park, in the Broads or in an area of outstanding natural beauty or special scientific interest.

(7) Where a company holding an appointment under Chapter I of Part II of this Act is proposing, in such a case as is mentioned in subsection (5)(c) above, to dispose of, or of any interest or right in or over, any of its protected land, it may enter into a covenant with the Secretary of State by virture of which it accepts obligations with respect to—

(a) the freedom of access to the land that is to be afforded to members of the public or to persons of any description; or

(b) the use of management of the land;

and a covenant under this subsection shall bind all persons deriving title from or under that company and shall be enforceable by the Secretary of State accordingly.

(8) Section 8 above shall have effect for the purposes of this section as if every proposal which—

(a) is made by a company holding an appointment as a water undertaker or sewerage undertaker with respect to land in a National Park, in the Broads or in an area of outstanding natural beauty or special scientific interest or with respect to any interest or right in or over any such land; and

(b) is a proposal for which the Secretary of State's consent or authorisation is required under this section,

were a proposal relating to the functions of that undertaker.

(9) In this section "compulsorily acquired land", in relation to the Authority, means any land of the Authority which—

(a) was acquired by the Authority compulsorily under the provisions of section 147 above or of section 150 below;

(b) was acquired by the Authority at a time when it was authorised under those provisions to acquire the land compulsorily;

(c) being land which has been transferred to the Authority in accordance with a scheme under Schedule 2 to this Act, was acquired by a predecessor of the Authority compulsorily under so much of any enactment in force at any time before the transfer date as conferred powers of compulsorily acquisition; or

(d) being land which has been so transferred, was acquired by such a predecessor at a time when it was authorised to acquire the land by virtue of any such powers as are mentioned in paragraph (c) above.)

(10) In this section—

"area of outstanding natural beauty or special scientific interest" means an area which—

(a) is for the time being designated as an area of outstanding natural beauty for the purposes of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949; or

(b) is an area in relation to which a notification given, or having effect as if given, under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (areas of special scientific interest) for the time being has effect;

and the reference in subsection (5)(c) above to an area of special scientific interest shall, accordingly, be construed as a reference to an area such as is mentioned in paragraph (b) of this definition; and

"the Broads" has the same meaning as in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988."

Amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, in line 14, at end insert—

'(3A) Before granting any consent or authorisation under this section, the Secretary of State shall undertake public consultation, and for the purposes of such consultation shall—

(a) invite representations from such individuals or organisations as appear to him to be concerned; and

(b) publish a notice of the applications for consent or authorisation in the London Gazette and such local newspapers and other publications as appear to him to be relevant and no period for representations shall be specified which is less than 42 days.'.

Amendment (b) to the Lords amendment, in line 35, in subsection (5)(c), after 'Broads', insert 'in a designated area'.

Amendment (c) to the Lords amendment, at end of subsection (1), add—

'"designated area" means any area which is for the time being designated by an order made by the Secretary of State by statutory instrument as an area in relation to which this section should apply as if it were in a National Park, the Broads or an area of outstanding beauty.'.

Lords amendments Nos. 171 and 172.

Dr. Cunningham: I shall discuss amendments (a) and (b) to Lords amendment No. 14 and amendments (a), (b) and (c) to Lords amendment No. 158.

Lords amendment No. 14 places a duty on the director general to secure something for water consumers from the profits made from the sale of protected land. Amendments (a) and (b) offer the Government two choices: first, that 50 per cent. of the proceeds should be given to the consumer, which would be in line with a statement made by the Minister for Water and Planning and Ministers in another place but which was not written into the legislation; and, secondly, that 100 per cent. of the proceeds from the sale of such land should be given to the consumer.

Lords amendment No. 158 is a new clause relating to land disposals and introduces new procedures for land

[Dr. Cunningham]

sales in national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty, sites of special scientific interest and the Norfolk broads. Amendments (a), (b) and (c) introduce an important measure of consultation into the land proposals and reinstate a provision for the Secretary of State to designate other areas as though the categories apply.

It never fails to astonish people here and abroad when they learn that a British Government are offering tracts of our national parks for sale. The idea behind the creation of national parks was to establish areas that should be given the utmost protection in law by the Government. Until the Government introduced the Bill, that was the generally agreed procedure, whatever party was in office.

Mr. Boswell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: In a moment.

Huge areas of our national parks, areas of oustanding natural beauty and other sensitive ecosystems are now up for sale. I readily accept that currently they are not all publicly owned and controlled, but they are strenuously and, in some cases, rigorously controlled. The Bill clears the way for not only the sale of such land but its potential exploitation, about which there is legitimate and widespread concern.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): That is wrong.

Dr. Cunningham: The Secretary of State says, "That is wrong." If he has read today's newspapers he will be aware that the director general of the National Trust agrees not with him but with us. In a letter that appeared in today's newspapers he said:

"The Government's retreat from its own measure means that a significant proportion of outstanding fine countryside could be under threat if, as seems likely, the new water companies decide to sell."

That is exactly the point that Labour Members are making, and the director general of the National Trust shares our view.

Mr. Howard: Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that, far from sharing his view, the director general of the National Trust is seeking an extension to further areas of the protection that the Bill provides for areas of outstanding natural beauty, national parks and sites of special scientific interest? The hon. Gentleman has just suggested that those areas would be up for grabs as a result of the legislation. He does not even understand the letter written by the director general of the National Trust.

Dr. Cunningham: Of course, I understand. I also understand the Council for the Protection of Rural England which has said:

"Third Reading in the House of Lords saw the Government reneging on previous commitments in a quite remarkable way. Amendments introduced by the Government only two weeks previously at Report Stage were turned on their heads as the Government apparently had second thoughts. These actions cause CPRE to seriously question the Government's commitment to protecting the environmental quality of the water industry's land assets."

It is no good the Minister saying that the Labour party does not understand. We have understood from the outset. On Second Reading and during a long Committee stage that same Minister told us that no changes to the Bill were necessary. In Committee he told us that all the amendments were irrelevant. He said that the Bill was perfect as it stood and that there was no question of weakness in respect of safeguarding our national heritage and environment, but then in the House of Lords his right hon. and noble Friends changed their minds. The Government then moved amendments, but subsequently went back on some of those very amendments.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman is wrong again. Clearly he has a dim recollection of what transpired in Committee, but I invite him to recall that I always said that we would listen to the arguments advanced on this matter and that we would introduce further protections if they were required. Given that the hon. Gentleman has been wrong in the past five minutes, will he now answer the question that I put to him a moment ago on the proper understanding of the letter in today's papers from the director general of the National Trust?

Dr. Cunningham: I understand that letter and I also understand what the CPRE has said. It is not good enough for Ministers always to come to the House, as they did on Second Reading and in Committee, and say that the Opposition always fail to understand. Every time Government legislation is criticised, apparently that criticism is never valid and is never borne out by the evidence. The answer always given is that the Opposition do not understand. The Minister's problem is that we understand only too well. So do the British people; that is his difficulty.

My memory is at least as good as the Minister's and better than that of the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) who was ranting earlier and could not even remember the date of the previous general election. We understood the proceedings in Committee and——

Mr. Howard: Answer the question.

Dr. Cunningham: I have answered the question. If the Minister goes back and reads the record, he will see that all the arguments that he dismissed in Committee were suddenly conceded in the House of Lords.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman must be made to come to the point instead of flapping and wriggling. Earlier he said that large parts of the national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty would be up for sale to anyone who wished to exploit them. That is not what the director general of the National Trust said. He commended the system of protection in the national parks and he said that he wanted it to be extended to areas other than the specified areas. The hon. Gentleman should withdraw his allegation that large parts of the national parks will be up for grabs. That is not true and he knows it. For once he should make an honest man of himself and withdraw that remark.

Dr. Cunningham: I am well aware, and I think the Secretary of State is, too, that the regional water authorities of England and Wales own about 500,000 acres of land.

Mr. Ridley: Flannel.

Dr. Cunningham: It is not flannel to state a fact. I did not think that anyone would dispute that the regional water authorities own about 500,000 acres of land, much of it in the national parks, in areas of outstanding natural beauty—in sites of special scientific interest and in fragile

ecosystems. That is not a Labour party view; it is fact. As a result of the proposals, that land is for sale. Its future well-being is also outwith the direct control of those proposals as that consideration will not be part of the so-called "core activities". That was the argument on Second Reading eight months ago. The Secretary of State cannot run away from the facts. That is why we have argued about those issues since the Bill was published.

Mr. Ridley *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Cunningham: No matter how hard the Secretary of State shakes his head that is why almost all environmental groups, including anglers, ramblers, the Open Space Society and the National Trust, have persistently bombarded Parliament and his Department for much tighter controls and safeguards. No matter what he says, the Secretary of State cannot get away from that.

We believe that the Government's amendments are something of a victory for the energetic way in which the issues have been pursued, notably by the Ramblers Association and the CPRE. I read in one newspaper article that the Government's advisers had said that the Bill as it originally stood was not good enough. The Countryside Commission and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds were also at the forefront in pressing for more safeguards. I also suggest that my hon. Friends and our colleagues in the other place deserve a little of the credit for the changes that are being made, although I know that the Secretary of State would not concede that for a moment.

On Second Reading we raised the issue of the land held by the water authorities and we have continued to do so because, from day one, we have said that the land—our national heritage—was in danger and represented a deliberate sweetener in the Bill. We warned that taxpayers were in danger of being ripped off.

During the Bill's proceedings the Government have huffed and puffed and they have insisted that the environment, recreation and conservation duties in the Bill apply to the land even when transferred to a subsidiary. The Ramblers Association has obtained two legal opinions to show that the Minister has simply got it wrong. One legal opinion stated:

> "I can find nothing in the Bill that so provides. The duty does not attach to the land and does not automatically pass with the transfer of the land."

We believe that the Government amendments—incidentally, they were not even introduced until the penultimate stage of the Bill's proceedings in the other place—are a limited and belated recognition of the dangers. In that sense, they are welcome. We are also aware, however, that some people in the City believe that restricting the opportunities for potential development will obviously make the assets less attractive as a purchase. Those views were highlighted again in the Harris poll in *The Observer* which found that more than 80 per cent. of fund managers were concerned that any legislation that curbed the water authorities' ability to make profits from their sizeable land and property portfolios would reduce the investment attractions.

Ministers are in a dilemma. They are trying to grab some vestige of public confidence by seeming to protect the land and the taxpayer, given that the scandal of the Royal Ordnance sale is still fresh in people's minds, while saying to the City and those who see land as the only possible money-spinner, "It is all right. We will not make it too difficult for land assets to be stripped and sold for profit".

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): My hon. Friend may be interested in the answer given to me today by the Minister to a written question which says that all nine water authorities in England have property or estate managers whose responsibilities include the disposal of surplus land. The function of those officers who are studying land disposal to make the profits to which my hon. Friend referred has concerned the Ramblers Association and others.

6.30 pm

Dr. Cunningham: My hon. Friend is right. Had the Government wanted to give safeguards and tough protection, they would have had far more rigorous proposals in the Bill from the outset. We now have a fudge. We had a ministerial statement to tell the public that the Government recognise that much land might be sold, but that if it was consumers would have perhaps 50 per cent. of the proceeds of the sale. However, there is no guarantee of that in the Bill and that is why we have tabled amendments (a) and (b).

There is no guarantee either that the House or the public will know the value of that land. We have fresh in our minds the experience of the sale of Royal Ordnance, which was heavily criticised some months ago by the Public Accounts Committee and more recently by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who is not in his place at present, said of that experience:

> "Whether a going concern or not, surely the vendor of any business must pay full regard to the potential for appreciation in the value of the land as a result of the granting of planning permission?"

The taxpayer lost millions of pounds as a result of the Royal Ordnance sale. Taxpayers are in danger of losing hundreds of millions of pounds from this sale, which is a potential scandal. As far as we know, there will be no public statement of the assessment of the value of all this land to the taxpayer, even though we know that the Government have just instructed their advisers, Schroder Wagg, to produce such a land valuation report. Why is that report not before the House? Why cannot the public and Parliament be told the exact value of our assets before they are disposed of? That is a germane question.

The proposals of the Secretary of State would carry a little more force if he were more open and honest about what is at stake. Everyone understands that the 500,000 acres to which we refer were bought, established, maintained and nurtured over decades at public expense and are a huge public asset. People would rightly argue that in many cases they are a priceless public asset. The House and the public are entitled to know exactly what the land is worth. If it is to be sold and if we are to try to safeguard the interests of the taxpayer and the consumer, the legislation should refer specifically to the benefit.

As everyone knows, I and my hon. Friends do not want the land to be sold at all. But if it is to be sold, should not the public have a guarantee about the benefit? As the Bill stands, they have no guarantee. Perhaps the Minister will tell us why it cannot be written into the Bill that a minimum of 50 per cent.—or, better still, 100 per cent. —of the proceeds will go to consumers. After all, it is our land. Why should we not have the proceeds from its sale?

The Government's concession on the land deal has been to introduce a new consent mechanism for land disposal, whereby the Secretary of State has powers to introduce

[Dr. Cunningham]

various conditions on land sales including, for some areas, an option for conservation organisations to purchase and for the imposition of management agreements. That is fine as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. In some respects, it obscures rather than illuminates the position and there are some serious defects, to which other people have referred, too.

The powers given to the Secretary of State are powers, not a duty to exercise those powers. He will have no statutory obligation to exercise them. He only has to make conditions on disposals that he "considers appropriate." The Ramblers Association believes that that is court-proof, legally sanitised wording. As the Bill stands, Ministers do not even have to announce that the land is up for sale in the first place. The transactions could go ahead without anyone knowing what is happening. If that were to be challenged, the Secretary of State would fall back on the Act and say that he had made conditions that he considered appropriate. Parliament would not be involved and there would be no proper discussion on the merits or otherwise of what was happening. Everything would be done quietly behind closed doors.

Mr. Boswell: Surely it is at that point that the obligations the Minister assumes under his general duty to protect the environment, among other considerations, would come into play. He could be tested in the exercise of the power of withholding consent to disposal.

Dr. Cunningham: I do not agree with that interpretation. If the hon. Gentleman studies the Bill again, perhaps he will agree with me.

There is no provision for public consultation on or notification of land disposal proceedings at any stage. That is an extraordinary omission and raises the possibilities of everything being done secretly. Our amendments provide for full consultation. If the Government want to be taken seriously on the issue, they should accept the amendments before it is too late.

The Secretary of State will also have discretion to designate areas as sites of special scientific interest or areas of outstanding natural beauty, such as the Broads. However, once again, it is at the discretion of the Secretary of State. Organisations such as the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Countryside Commission consider the power to designate essential for the 200,000 acres of land that will not be covered by the new clause. The Government have tried to make much of the last-minute addition of SSSIs to the clause, which replaces the power to designate, but we and the conservation bodies consider it inadequate. It is an attempt, apparently, to deal with the problem while removing a potentially vital additional power. It is a sleight of hand and our view is widely shared outside the House.

Our discussions on the land issue are affected by a further major reservation. Under any other Secretary of State, and certainly under a Labour Secretary of State, the powers could and almost certainly would be exercised to give far tougher and more meaningful protection to land. I say that now so that no one can be in any doubt about our intentions. However, under the present Secretary of State, who has a laissez-faire attitude not only to these issues but to planning generally, the Government's amendments are simply an attempt to pay lip service to the notion of needing to give more rigorous protection to our land. They introduce, over and above the current flawed planning system, a mechanism for the Secretary of State, if he wishes, to slip through land sales to anyone he wishes, in any circumstances he wishes, without the necessity of public notification, public consultation or a public right of appeal. That is wholly unsatisfactory and that is why we have tabled our amendments.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I wish to speak to several amendments, but to refer specifically to the fate of Barn Elms reservoir, which is currently under the control of Thames Water.

Barnes itself is only seven miles from Westminster and still possesses a village atmosphere in an ever-more frenetic world. Although it is blighted by incessant aircraft noise, few residents know of a more pleasant urban environment. We fiercely hold on to our metropolitan open land and, despite high-density housing, relief is at hand in the natural environment, with the river Thames on two sides, Barnes common to the south and Barn Elms reservoir to the east.

Barn Elms comprises nearly 70 acres of reservoir, split into four almost equal quarters. There are approximately 80 acres of surrounding land, including filter beds, allotments and recreational open land. One major problem of the site, and the source of its main threat, is that its status as a site of special scientific interest, granted by the Nature Conservancy Council in June 1985, has recently been lifted. Although there is some argument about whether SSSI status has legally been removed when that status is lifted, it is obvious that removing the cast-iron SSSI status poses an additional threat to that part of London. Because of its proximity to the centre of London, the potential value of the land to a developer is exceptionally high. It must be a gleam in the eye of some official at Thames Water.

I ask my hon. and learned Friend the Minister to consider what Barnes might be like if a large housing estate were built on the site at Barn Elms. The only exit from Barnes to the north is Hammersmith bridge, which has a severely restricted weight limit. Two new crossings over the Thames would be needed to deal with what would be a doubling of the size of the population of Barnes. At the moment one has to wait upwards of half an hour to cross Hammersmith bridge in the morning. If the population of Barnes were doubled, the environmental considerations would be absolutely grotesque——

Mr. Mullin: I have considerable sympathy with the case outlined by the hon. Gentleman, but I invite him to raise his horizons slightly and to recognise that we are talking not only about Barn Elms reservoir—important though that may be to his constituents—but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has said, about 500,000 acres of some of our prime land.

Mr. Hanley: I readily accept that. However, it is up to each hon. Member to address those general problems in any way that he or she chooses. This matter is of urgent consideration to the people of Barnes and is symptomatic of the general position. Therefore, in choosing this particular area of difficulty caused by the legislation, I am addressing the more general points——

Mr. Mullin *rose*——

Mr. Hanley: No, I shall not give way again because this is only a short debate.

Mr. Mullin *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order.

Mr. Hanley: I do not want to give way because this is a short debate——

Mr. Mullin: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way again. I suspect that this is an example of the phenomenon known as "not in my back yard". It is distasteful to those of us who oppose the Bill root and branch to see special pleading from hon. Members who represent constituencies that are a good deal more leafy than those that many Opposition Members represent.

Mr. Hanley: In a strange way I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention. I can now point out to my constituents that the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) believes that hon. Members should not fight fiercely for the interests of their constituents. The hon. Gentleman is saying that I should not care about my own back yard. That is disgraceful——

Mr. Mullin: No, I am not saying that.

Mr. Hanley: I hope that Labour party supporters in my constituency will regret the hon. Gentleman's words.

Mr. Mullin: I have said that I was not saying that.

6.45 pm

Mr. Hanley: In a debate on Barn Elms reservoir on 29 July 1988, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), stated, on her very first day as a Minister:

"I assure him"—

that is, me—

"that that is a very premature fear at this stage, although it is entirely understandable and right that people living in or near areas of wildlife interest wish those areas to be properly protected and looked after. That is especially true in urban areas, where opportunities to see and enjoy wildlife are greatly valued . . .

If the water authority decides that Barn Elms reservoir is no longer required for operational purposes, it could still be managed positively for wildlife benefit by the local authority or a conservation group. The NCC is well able to assist with such arrangements as a result of its expertise and professionalism. . . .

Whatever the future ownership of the site, any proposals for a change in its current use would have to be considered in accordance with the guidance given in circular 27/87 entitled 'Nature Conservation'. That reinforces the advice given to local authorities that they should take full account of the needs of nature conservation not only in determining individual planning applications but in formulating general planning policies. An awareness of conservation should be built into the whole range of their activities affecting the use of land.

I hope that I have been able to reassure my hon. Friend that, even if the site should eventually be de-notified as an SSSI, there are a number of other ways of protecting its wildlife interest".—[*Official Report*, 29 July 1988; Vol. 138, c. 860-63.]

That view was reinforced by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning who, in a letter to me dated 8 June 1989, stated that the amendments that we are discussing

"will ensure that the conservation and recreation duties will apply to the management of all land owned by water companies even if they no longer need it for their statutory functions. If such land is disposed of in areas of environmental importance the Secretary of State will have wide powers under the Bill to impose, as a condition of sale, any measures necessary to ensure continued protection of special conservation and amenity features of the land. These will include an obligation that the land be first offered to a conservation body, or that it is indefinitely protected by covenants or management agreements with National Parks authorities or local authorities. These provisions have been warmly welcomed by the Council for the Protection of Rural England."

Towards the end of the letter he stated:

"It is worth stressing that local authorities which prepare up to date local plans in line with regional guidance can decide where development shall and shall not take place. We have made it clear that we will be guided by them on appeal if developers ignore such plans."

That last sentence is crucial because it shows that, contrary to some of the rumours circulating in my area, it is up to the local authorities to decide whether metropolitan open land is used for building. I am asking my hon. Friend to give an assurance to my constituents that if the local authority decides that the metropolitan open land should remain as such, the Department of the Environment will not try to maximise any benefit for the consumers of Thames Water and decide to overturn the local authority's decision. In the various guidelines that it has issued, the Department has said that it wants to protect metropolitan open land even more stringently than that land has been protected in the past. The draft guidance further protects such property.

There are two major reasons why the rumours of the dangers to this site have been given credence. The first is that Thames Water has apparently said to Richmond upon Thames council that its plans for the disposal of Thames Water, by giving it to the Wildfowl Trust at Slimbridge, have had to be abandoned because of these amendments. The money allocated by the Metropolitan water board for the establishment of a wildfowl trust in the area can no longer be used for that purpose; it must now be used for the benefit of the consumer. In other words, Thames Water was providing cash to set up a wildfowl trust but now believes that it cannot do so because the money must be given to Thames Water consumers. That is a wrong interpretation of the current position and I call on my hon. Friend to give an assurance on that point.

The other main reason why the rumour has been circulating is as follows. The Minister for Water and Planning said in his letter:

"The Government has also asked Debenham Tewson and Chinnocks to conduct a thorough valuation of water authority land. Sites which are surplus to requirement or likely to become so within the next 5 years have been identified. Few of these have planning permission for alternative use which could, if secured, significantly increase their present open market value. This exercise will ensure that the valuation of the companies contained in individual prospectuses includes a reasonable amount for land holdings."

A valuation of Barn Elms has produced a high hope value, as it is known. That must imply a strong possibility that the land will be used for housing, and that high hope value will affect the value of Thames Water in the prospectus. If my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State says that there is a great likelihood that metropolitan open land will remain as metropolitan open land and will not be used for high-density housing, the high hope value for Barn Elms is inaccurate and the value to be given to Thames Water in the prospectus will therefore be exaggerated.

[Mr. Hanley]

I seek an assurance that the Government will carefully consider the amenity value of the area and the unique nature of the wildlife, which includes more than 40 different types of bird, in an area that would otherwise be entirely built-up urban environment. I ask the Government to continue to ensure that such areas are valued and protected, for the benefit of our constituents and local residents and the population of London in general.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that we have a lot of ground to cover in a very short time.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I support the amendments. Amendments (a) and (b) would ensure that half the proceeds and 100 per cent. of the proceeds of land sales, respectively, would go to the consumer. There is no doubt that that is right, although it is regrettable that it has been necessary to table such amendments. We are witnessing the land sale of the century. Unfortunately, in the other place, the Government reneged on their previous commitments by removing the discretionary powers of the Secretary of State and thus made a mockery of their previous promises.

I am especially concerned about what will happen in Wales. My constituency contains two thirds of the land holdings of Welsh Water—21,000 acres in the Brecon Beacons national park and 45,000 acres in the Elan valley. Both locally and nationally it is feared that that land will be sold off. The Council for the Protection of Rural England has said that at least 15 per cent. of the Elan valley—7,000 acres—is in danger as a result of the exclusion of a number of exceptional landscape areas from possible protection. Those areas need to be protected, but it is feared that they will be exploited and farmers in the Elan valley already see signs to suggest that their rents will escalate.

The land should be properly valued. Amendments were tabled in Committee to involve district valuers in the valuation of the land and to prevent the involvement of too many commercial interests. We can only hope for a fair valuation and that we shall all know what the valuation is and when and where land is to be sold. The process should not take place behind closed doors.

I draw the attention of the House to the fact that on 23 March 12 merchant bankers were helicoptered around Wales to look at the real estate for sale. Obviously, they did not know where the land was, so they decided to take a look at it. I think that some of them want to get their hands on it, although according to a report about the attractions of the sale for the City, which appeared in *The Observer* yesterday, some of them are not so keen as they were before. I believe that there is skulduggery afoot.

An interesting advertisement appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* on 1 June. A managing director of Welsh Water Enterprises was sought, at an annual salary of £40,000 plus bonus, car and benefit, the location to be Cardiff or Brecon. The advertisement said:

> "Welsh Water is looking for a Managing Director for Welsh Water Enterprises, intended to be one of four subsidiary companies of the proposed new group."

We do not know what the four subsidiary companies will do, but I bet my bottom dollar that some of them will be involved in the sale and exploitation of land. That is what this part of the Bill is all about, and that is why I support the amendments.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I wish to refer to land sales and the way in which they will be conducted. I share other hon. Members' concern that, although the Lords amendment would extend the arrangements for the protection of land and in that sense is welcome, the protection needs to be taken very much further. In particular, we should deal with extensions of notification of sites of special scientific interest and the potential damage that might be done to them. We should also incorporate the code of environmental practice in the water undertakers' licence. Those important issues were not dealt with adequately in the other place. They are not especially controversial, and I hope that the Minister will deal with them when he winds up the debate.

Amendment (b) would require the transfer of 100 per cent. of the assets from land sales to the water companies for reinvestment in infrastructure. That is both sound and sensible. If the Government are convinced of the need for more money to be raised to provide for investment in infrastructure, they should accept our amendment. If they do not, they will be acknowledging the fact that they are handing over the proceeds of land sales to private speculators. If that happens, the benefits of the sales will not go to consumers or—more important—to improve the infrastructure to the necessary standard.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I shall deal first with Lords amendments Nos. 14, 41, 43, 157, 158, 171 and 172, and then with the Opposition amendments. I shall be brief because I know that hon. Members on both sides wish to speak in this short debate. The Lords amendments achieve two purposes—to ensure that the special environment quality of much of the land in water authority ownership can be indefinitely protected, and to ensure that the customers of the appointed water and sewerage undertakers share the benefit of any disposals of surplus land.

It is a distinctive feature of this privatisation that the water authorities have very extensive landholdings—more than 430,000 acres—the majority of which lie in national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty and sites of special scientific interest. The amendments meet various concerns about the future of this land. The Government listened carefully to all that was said, in this House and in another place, and by conservation and other bodies outside this House. That is reflected in the amendments which now come for the approval of the House, and which we believe provide a full answer to the concerns that have been expressed.

Amendment No. 14 would impose an additional duty on the Secretary of State and the Director General of Water Services to ensure that the interests of customers are protected in the application of proceeds from disposals of protected land. Protected land is defined in amendment No. 172. Amendments Nos. 41, 42 and 43 make it possible to entrench certain conditions of appointment relating to disposals of land.

The new clause is the centrepiece of this group of proposals. Water and sewerage companies will be able to dispose of their protected land and interests in that land only with the consent of the Secretary of State, or in

accordance with a general authorisation given by him. There is a consent requirement for the National Rivers Authority as well, but that applies only to compulsorily acquired land.

The consent mechanism serves three important purposes. First, it will enable the Secretary of State to require that the Crichel Down rules are observed when there are disposals of land which was compulsory acquired. The rules are designed to protect the interests of the former owners of land. They require that when any land which was acquired by compulsory purchase is to be sold, it should be offered first to the person from whom it was acquired. Disposals to former owners under these arrangements will be at a price reflecting current market value, as determined by the district valuer.

The second purpose of the consent provisions relates to the new duty concerning the proceeds from land disposals in amendment No. 14. The intention is to enable customers to benefit from the net receipts from future disposals or land, while preserving incentives for land to be released or developed. It is essential that the arrangements ensure that customers are not prejudiced by two-stage disposals via sister companies, with the sister company realising all of the development gains. This is where the consent mechanism in amendment No. 158 plays a part.

7 pm

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intends to give the Director General of Water Services a role in disposals through a consent procedure which will be constructed to allow as much self-policing as possible. There will in effect be three categories of disposal. In the first, directors of appointed companies will be able to provide the director with a certificate that the disposal is an arm's length disposal, with no continuing interest in the land by the appointed company or any related company, and that the best price reasonably obtainable has been obtained.

Where such a certificate cannot be provided, but the disposal is below a certain threshold fixed in relation to the value or area of the land concerned, the company will need a certificate from an independent valuer approved by the director general that the best price has been obtained. The independent valuers will report in particular on any prospect that the value of the land may be enhanced by a future planning permission.

In the third category involving disposals above the threshold which are not arm's length disposals, a specific consent will be needed. As a last resort, the director would be able to block inappropriate disposals at less than the best consideration reasonably obtainable, especially where sister companies are involved.

The consent requirements are designed to make sure that the best price is realised by the appointed company. There will be conditions of appointment determining how that value is to be taken into account in price control, so that customers share the benefit of proceeds. The intention is to set a target allowance for disposals when the RPI plus K price control formula is first set. This will be discussed with each authority and company, but it is proposed that it should reflect 100 per cent. of the open market value of identified surplus sites. Where actual receipts vary from the forecast amount a further adjustment of K will be made reflecting 50 per cent. of the excess or shortfall.

Companies will therefore have an incentive to dispose of their surplus land, and to the extent that they can improve on the value of land by obtaining planning permission or selling with clawback conditions that operate in the event of a future planning permission, the improvements of value will be shared 50-50 between customer and shareholder.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Moynihan: If I do not answer the point that the hon. Gentleman wishes to make, I will give way in a minute.

The third purpose of the consent mechanism is to enable the Secretary of State to impose special requirements when there are disposals of land of particular environmental quality. The essential elements are as follows

Within the national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty, the broads, and sites of special scientific interest, special environmental controls will apply to any disposal of land. For any such disposal the Secretary of State's consent will be required, and in deciding whether to give that consent he is to be bound by the clause 8 duties, to further conservation, and to have regard to access.

Within those areas, there is to be a range of special conditions which the Secretary of State can impose on any disposal. He can require that the land be offered in the first instance to a conservation body approved for this purpose by the Countryside Commission—a proposal originally put forward by the National Trust and other conservation bodies. He can also require, as a condition of any disposal, that management agreements can be entered with the relevant park authority or local authority, to the satisfaction of the commission. Finally, he can require covenants for the protection of particular features of the land.

The consent procedures will give the Secretary of State a means of ensuring that the special environmental quality of water authority land can be protected indefinitely. That is in addition to the powerful framework of environmental duties already provided for in clauses 8 to 10.

Mr. Wigley: What concerns me and what may concern other hon. Members who listened carefully to the Minister a few moments ago is that the Minister described the structure as one which can encourage holders of land to dispose of land. Surely the whole thrust of what we were looking for in Committee and in the House of Lords was to avoid any encouragement towards disposal, no matter what conditions apply, and to impose conditions only when disposal is for some reason inevitable. Are the Government now claiming that disposal is a mechanism whereby funds may be raised to make up for the shortfall which might otherwise occur?

Mr. Moynihan: I totally reject that analysis. If the hon. Gentleman looked at the small print, he would realise that, no matter who owns national parks land now or the water authorities if they wanted to dispose of land in the national parks, there have never been such rigorous controls as those that will be applied now as a result of this measure. There have never been such rigorous controls on the sale of any land in national parks, let alone on private land which may be held after privatisation. Those rigorous controls are welcomed, as the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) stated, as a victory for conservation and recreation. They are a victory because they go further

[Mr. Moynihan]

in the protection and enhancement of land for conservation and recreation than anything ever produced before.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): It is crucial that we get this point clear because, as the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said, some bodies concerned with the environment and access to the countryside are confused about this part of the Bill. It has changed so often that I am not surprised that they are confused. I am confused as well.

Is the Minister saying that voluntary access agreements which exist only in the Peak District national park in my constituency will definitely be protected on the sale of land even to a company other than that which buys from the water board even on transfer of that land to a subsidiary? Or does the Secretary of State have discretionary powers to protect that access? I should like to know that those access agreements will definitely be protected. If they are to be protected, I do not need to speak again on this amendment and I welcome the changes wholeheartedly.

Mr. Moynihan: For the first time with regard to the sale of any land in national parks, the Secretary of State will have the power to protect access to that land——

Mr. Hawkins: Discretionary power?

Mr. Moynihan: It is important that the Secretary of State ensures that any change in the use of that land is taken into account and that he considers the options that I have outlined to the House today when he exercises his powers. In clause 8, the Secretary of State has a duty to enhance and protect conservation and recreation. There is an important backcloth to that discretionary power, which goes further than any measure with regard to private land sales inside or outside national parks. The Government have also recognised the importance of bringing SSSIs into the category. That will include a large amount of land. The House should welcome that and it should be celebrated as a victory by hon. Members on both sides.

Mr. Hawkins: There are 70 square miles of voluntary access agreements in the Peak District national park. My constituents and I want to know whether that land will be protected by the Bill. I cannot see why we cannot have it on the face of the Bill that the voluntary access agreements will be protected. Some of those agreements run out very soon, in 1991. It is not enough to say that the Secretary of State has discretion to protect them. I do not like discretionary powers of that kind. I want to know that those agreements are definitely protected.

Mr. Moynihan: I give my hon. Friend a clear assurance that those rights of access are protected by the Bill. I have also outlined to the House the precise position that would occur on the sale of any of that land in future. It is very important for me to repeat what I said at the Dispatch Box a few months ago and to reinforce this point. Voluntary rights of access and the right to roam are continued and are protected by the Bill. The safeguards that I discussed when arguing in support of the major environmental safeguards which have been proposed and debated in the House of Lords and which we are considering today—they have been welcomed by the Opposition as a victory for conservation and recreation—apply also to the sale of land.

Dr. Cunningham: Before the Minister slips into the error of saying that the Opposition welcome what has happened in the House of Lords, I remind him that I said that it was a victory in so far as it went, but that the amendments did not go far enough. What would be the circumstances if the Secretary of State—whoever that may be—elects not to use his discretionary powers in those matters? They are, after all, discretionary powers.

Mr. Moynihan: As I have outlined, if the Secretary of State is at odds with the clause 8 duties to which he is subject, he would be clearly out of order in respect of the duties—they are not discretionary—which are outlined in the Bill and are potentially subject to judicial review. That is not a discretion to ignore clause 8 duties. That is right at the heart of the debate and empowers the enhancement of conservation and recreation and the protection of conservation and recreation duties under clause 8.

I have outlined the safeguards for the sales that are being proposed. The hon. Member for Copeland conveniently and completely ignored the clause 8 duties, which are rigorous and were the subject of comprehensive debate. They are absolutely central to what we are debating as the backbone of protection for the land under consideration.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): Will my hon. Friend the Minister confirm that when land is offered for sale at the Secretary of State's direction an opportunity will first be given to a conservation group to buy it? Will he confirm also that it will be at the undeveloped site value?

Mr. Moynihan: It will be at market value. That is obviously important in ensuring that the sale of plc land is at market value. That is recognised to be in the interests of customers and of the company. It is important that there is protection on the 50-50 arrangements that we propose to make sure that customers gain if more than 50 per cent. of the actual value of the land is realised after privatisation. It does not become 100 per cent. It is protection to ensure that we never see the problems that we have sometimes seen in the past with potential windfall profits after privatisation. That cannot happen because of the protection in the Bill. Money will be adjudged, reported on and audited in prospectuses. It is nonsense to say that there will be no knowledge of the value of the land. Of course land must be valued, audited and put before potential investors when it comes to privatisation proceeds and the sale of the water plcs.

The hon. Member for Copeland made a point about the letter of the director general of the National Trust in the press today. According to the hon. Gentleman, as a result of our proposals large areas of what have been described as jewels in the crown will be bereft of protection. The Countryside Commission identified 15 such jewels. Because of the important measures that we have taken today in supporting the Lords amendments, 12 of them are fully covered, one is a proposed area of outstanding natural beauty and another is covered as to 80 per cent. of the total—and most of the remaining one is covered. It would therefore be more accurate to say that the vast majority of land in those jewels in the crown is covered, and that is because of the extension and inclusion of SSSIs.

Finally, it has been suggested that 7,000 acres of the Elan valley will not qualify for environmental safeguards. That is contrary to what the Government stated in the House of Lords and is not correct. Lord Hesketh stated that inclusion in SSSIs would bring in almost all of the Elan valley. It will bring in about 80 to 90 per cent. My noble Friend's statement was perfectly fair.

7.15 pm

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): These amendments do not give full protection. The Minister may suggest that there is a victory, but the safeguards that are being offered are hollow. Opposition Members believe that our land—our national heritage—remains in danger. The Government must decide where their priorities lie. They should ask any of the 2,000 people who follow the activities of the National Trust each day in June what their priorities are. They should ask members of the Ramblers Association and of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds what price they put on that outstanding land—land that is our natural and national heritage. What is most important—the commitment to conservation and environmental inprovement which is shared by the overwhelming majority of the population, or the commitment to shareholders?

If there is to be a sell-off of any of the land that is presently owned by the water undertakers, why cannot the House know how much it is worth? If it is to be sold, why cannot the full proceeds be passed on to consumers? Those issues are important.

For Opposition Members—certainly those who were on the Committee—there is a sense of déjà vu about the debate. We are paying and will continue to pay the price of the Minister's error in Committee on the arrangements for the disposal of land. It was not clear in Committee and it is not clear now—it will not be clear after the Bill has gone through Parliament—exactly what will happen about access to the countryside and the disposal of land.

Despite what the Minister has told us, there still remains a gaping loophole in the Bill. At the heart of it is our access to the countryside. Currently, water authorities have recreational duties for the land. The weakness is that that land can be transferred and, on doing so, a subsidiary company can evade recreational duties. We pressed the Minister on that matter time and again in Committee. All that he could do was to give incorrect answers. The Minister and counsel said two different things about the disposal of land. We have the Ramblers Association and other organisations to thank for counsel's opinion. The Minister was wrong then; the loophole existed. The Lords amendment attempts to plug that loopnole. We criticise it because it gives the Secretary of State great power to which the Minister has referred, but that power is discretionary. There is no duty on the Secretary of State to exercise it.

Mr. Hawkins: The danger is that we will again confuse the public. The hon. Lady's speech was clearly written before the debate. The Minister has said that there is a duty on the Secretary of State in clause 8. I should be delighted if the hon. Lady would clarify that duty for my constituents. To assert that there is no duty is contrary to what the Minister said.

Ms. Walley: As usual, we are restrained by lack of time in this debate. The hon. Gentleman made a point about whether the power is discretionary and whether there is a duty. One depends upon the other. The Secretary of State, the Ramblers Association and other voluntary associations may have to consult further. Matters relating to the disposal of and access to land are not clear at this stage when Parliament is discussing it. I ask the Minister where that duty is.

Mr. Morley: Will my hon. Friend explore clause 8, because it is not enforceable in law and also contains the words "take notice of"? Will she explore, too, whether clause 8 will apply to the holding companies into which the water authorities will put the land?

Ms. Walley: As always, I thank my hon. Friend for bringing those points so well to the attention of the House. They are on record and will be continuously mentioned.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Walley: No, because time is short.

Our amendment recognises that the Government were wrong. The Lords amendment is nowhere near good enough and does not put matters right, despite what the Minister has said. It is true that the Secretary of State will be given a vast power, but how is it intended that he should use it? What criteria should he be required to use when determining requests for land disposal? Our concern, too, is that no one will know when or whether the Secretary of State is using that power. Will the Minister tell us whether the Secretary of State is under any requirement to consult the public, the local authorities or the organisations which have done so much to make access to the countryside a key issue in the opposition to the sell-off of the water industry? Are we really going to see secret land deals? How shall we know what conditions the Secretary of State has imposed before land is sold off? Will the Minister say why he has confused the issue by referring to protected and designated land, and why in his comments earlier he did not make the situation abundantly clear, as he was requested to do in the letter of the director general of the National Trust to *The Independent*?

What signposts are the Government following? They say that they are following the conservation signpost, but, in effect, they are following the one marked "shareholders' profits". Is that not why there are no requirements for public consultation when it comes to the sell-off of land transferred to the subsidiary bodies? Is it not the case that that is precisely the place where the Government lost their way before? We have heard much about the general duties that exist to protect the SSSIs. How can we even believe what the Government say when the Minister responsible for water and planning in another place said no substantial damage has been done to SSSIs in the past three years? However, the plain facts are that, in the four years to 1988, 700 have been damaged and 200 substantially damaged.

The sell-off of the water industry is one more example of the Government's complete disregard for our national heritage. Will the Minister give us a commitment now to effective public participation over this issue of the disposal of our national heritage? If not, the millions of us who care about the threats facing our countryside and access to the land will have to wait until we have the opportunity to vote with our feet on this matter.

Mr. Pike: I must say to the hon. Members for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) and for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) that I believe that the Minister has dodged very

[Mr. Pike]

skilfully through the minefield that has been set by his hon. Friends, but he has not answered any of the questions put to him. His words will not give the type of guarantee that those hon. Gentlemen are seeking on the disposal of land, or the protection of access to land and the existing concessions. If those hon. Gentlemen want to ensure that such protection is safeguarded, they must vote with us for some of our amendments.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) will try to withdraw amendment (a), so that we can vote on amendment (b). It is important that amendment (b) is put to the vote because there will be no reason——

Mr. Moynihan: I should have liked to respond to all the points, and not only those made by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) to whom I shall reply in full, for example, in drawing out the critical point that it will be an irrelevant consideration to take account of financial benefits towards consumers when determining a planning appeal. There were many other points such as that to which I wanted to respond to my hon. Friend, but I shall do so in writing. I am sure that the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) will appreciate that the reason why I did not do so was to allow the hon. Gentleman and others to contribute to the debate.

Mr. Pike: I also appreciate that the Minister voted for the guillotine that the Government imposed, which prevented us from having sufficient time to debate the issues. If there had not been a guillotine, we would all have had time to make our points to which the Minister could have replied. Once again he is leading us astray.

I was making the point that clearly, if there was no financial incentive in selling land, there would be no reason for water authorities wanting to dispose of land. The Minister has said that there have been concessions, and we welcome the fact that the other place has moved in the right direction. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland made clear that those concessions do not go far enough in protecting the land and access to the land that the Opposition would wish to see.

Mr Livsey: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Minister's points have been specifically addressed to the national parks? He has said very little about the areas outside national parks, except perhaps those in the constituency of the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). That gives us great cause for concern, because there are large tracts of land outside the national parks and SSSIs but about which he has given us little guarantee.

Mr Pike: The hon. Gentleman has made an important point. I accept that we are concerned about land both outside and inside national parks. As with the hon. Gentleman's constituency, the moorland around Burnley and in north-east Lancashire would not be protected by the type of concession that was made in the other place.

Mrs. Mahon: Twenty per cent. of the land in my area will be up for grabs. Far from it being the sale of the century, we are referring to it as the great land robbery.

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend's constituency is, of course, on the other side of the Pennines from mine and has identical problems to those of Burnley.

We are concerned about how the phrase "surplus land" will be interpreted. I wanted to mention specifically amendment (a), which concerns consultation. If we wrote into the Bill that consultation would be required, that would be a major step forward. The Opposition believe that local authorities and bodies such as the Ramblers Association and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, who have given admirable advice to both sides of the House, should be consulted. It must be remembered that those organisations have fought for many of the things that have been achieved.

Much of the access to the lands owned by the water authorities was not conceded readily but has had to be fought for over many years by such organisations as the Ramblers Association. Such organisations fear that, if the Bill goes through in its present form, even with the concessions made in the other House—despite what the Minister has said—those things will be in jeopardy. The Minister knows that he cannot assure us that none of our land will be disposed of and that existing accesses will be maintained. He knows that wherever possible the value of the land will be realised, because that is the way that privatisation will proceed. The Minister knows that the only reason for that being put into the Bill now is that moving the industry from the public to the private sector has introduced a new factor—making a profit. It is only when one needs to make a profit that one starts to look at the sale of land. I hope that the amendment is carried.

Dr. Cunningham: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment proposed: (b), in line 4, leave out 'any of the proceeds' and insert 'all of the proceeds'.—*[Dr. Cunningham.]*

Question put, That the amendment *to the Lords amendment* be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 193, Noes 302.

Division No. 273] **[7.29 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Caborn, Richard
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Callaghan, Jim
Allen, Graham	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Anderson, Donald	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Canavan, Dennis
Armstrong, Hilary	Cartwright, John
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Ashton, Joe	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Clay, Bob
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Clelland, David
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Battle, John	Cohen, Harry
Beckett, Margaret	Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Beith, A. J.	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Cousins, Jim
Bermingham, Gerald	Cox, Tom
Bidwell, Sydney	Crowther, Stan
Blunkett, David	Cryer, Bob
Boateng, Paul	Cunningham, Dr John
Boyes, Roland	Dalyell, Tam
Bradley, Keith	Darling, Alistair
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Dewar, Donald
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Dixon, Don
Buckley, George J.	Dobson, Frank

Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ken Eastham

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'th's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick

McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after half-past Seven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to order this day, to put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Lords amendment No. 14 agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 55 agreed to.—[Special entry.]

Lords amendments Nos. 15 to 43 agreed to.

Clause 20

ORDERS FOR SECURING COMPLIANCE WITH CERTAIN PROVISIONS

Lords amendment: No. 44, in page 20, line 39, leave out "subsection (5)" and insert "subsections (2) and (5)".

Mr. Ridley: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we shall discuss Lords amendments Nos. 45 to 48.

No. 49, in page 21, leave out lines 45 to 47.

Amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, at end add 'and insert "except that the Secretary of State or Director as the case may be shall have regard in any case to which paragraph (b) of this subsection applies to any report submitted to the Director by a technical assessor appointed under section 60 below in respect of the contraventions concerned, and the Director shall within two weeks of receiving any such report submit a copy of it to the European Commission"'.

Lords amendments Nos. 50 to 53 and No. 58.

Mr. Ridley: I understand that it would be for the convenience of the House if we also discussed Lords amendments Nos. 62 and 64. Does the House agree that I should speak to those two amendments?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With the agreement of the House, that is in order.

Mr. Ridley: The amendments arise out of discussions that we have had with the European Commission which, I am happy to report, is now satisfied that the clause, with these amendments, is fully consistent with Community law. Essentially, the amendments place the holder of my office and the director general under a duty to make a final or provisional order if they believe that a water undertaker is breaching certain statutory duties except in the circumstances specified in subsection (5). In addition, companies will now have to give and comply with undertakings under subsection (5)(b) concerning compliance programmes instead of entering into agreements. If the Secretary of State is not satisfied with an undertaking he is obliged to take enforcement action under the clause.

There have been some rather confusing reports on this issue, and I believe that it would be helpful if I put that right. Clause 20, after all, is only one element of a wider process that also needs to be appreciated. Clause 20(5) provides a powerful and effective mechanism—which I think has no parallel in other European countries—whereby, for example, water undertakers set out in detail their programmes for meeting the standards of the drinking water directive and the Secretary of State ensures that the programmes are carried out. We are at this moment discussing with each water undertaker its long-term investment programmes for drinking water quality, including measures to comply with the EC directive. It is the Government's firm policy that those supplies that do not meet the directive's strict standards will be improved as quickly as possible. However, they involve designing and building new treatment works in some places and replacing or re-lining water mains in others. While that work is taking place, it is essential to maintain water supplies, to protect people's health and to minimise the disruption to the general public.

Provided that the water company is carrying out a compliance programme acceptable to the Secretary of

State. there would be no point in his taking enforcement action against it. Nor would there be any point in the European Commission taking action against the United Kingdom Government, because the programme would be being implemented as fast as possible. The undertaker could proceed faster only if we were prepared to accept adverse consequences for water consumers and for the public generally.

7.45 pm

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Although I agree that there is no point in persistently attacking a water authority that is trying to put right something that has been demonstrated to be wrong in a court of law, does my right hon. Friend agree that it could send the wrong signals if the consent limits were moved downwards at exactly the point where a works was undertaking investment to meet the old consent levels which were those that the public wanted it to achieve?

Mr. Ridley: Yes, but that is not what is being proposed. We are proposing to raise consent levels to the standard of the directive—and, in some cases, to higher standards. When we see a programme to implement the necessary works in the shortest possible time, it is only then that the so-called protection would arise.

Only last week, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning had a constructive and fruitful discussion with Commissioner Ripa di Meana, during which he reaffirmed the Government's determination to comply with the drinking water directive as soon as is reasonably practicable. For his part, Commissioner Ripa di Meana said that he accepted the Government's resolve in the matter. Moreover, he accepted that these major programmes could not be carried out overnight, a view that he had previously expressed in a letter that was placed in the Library on 23 May.

The water undertakers must convince the Secretary of State that they are doing all that they can to comply speedily with the drinking water directive, and the European Commission will want to see the programmes because it has a role in ensuring that European legislation is properly implemented. The undertakers' programmes are now being drawn up and will be made public later this year, as soon as we have them. The programmes will contain the dates by which compliance with the remaining standards in the directive will be achieved. The details of those programmes will be set out in formal undertakings. The Commission will be interested to see those programmes, and I am sure that it will recognise that the United Kingdom is proceeding conscientiously and swiftly with them. No other member state complies with the drinking water directive, and no member state, as far as I am aware, has examined its investment needs in the rigorous way that forthcoming privatisation has required. Nor does it have such a powerful and effective mechanism for ensuring that the compliance programmes are carried out according to plan and date. If a water company defaults on its undertaking for no good reason, the Secretary of State will be obliged to take enforcement action, which could ultimately lead to the loss of a company's licence. That is, of course, a last resort, but the threat is there. I hope that the House will agree to the amendment.

I shall invite the House to disagree with Lords amendments Nos. 62 to 64 at the appropriate time because they are seriously flawed in a number of respects. They are the result of the famous ambush one night in another place, when Opposition peers turned up late and in large numbers, although I make no complaint about that—*[Interruption.]* I have organised such events in previous incarnations. However, it does not give any respectability to the argument in favour of the amendments.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: It is interesting that the Secretary of State thinks that the amendments were carried in another place only because of an ambush. If he is so confident that the other place would have agreed with his position had it known that the vote would take place, why did he not try to reverse the decision in the Lords?

Mr. Ridley: I am not skilled in the procedures of another place, but I am informed that their Lordships preferred the matter to be dealt with the other way.

Amendments Nos. 62 to 64 specify 1 September 1993 for compliance with the drinking water directive. However, specifying such a date in legislation is contrary to the directive, which set a much earlier date in 1985. The only possible legal duty must be to comply now, and the Bill provides for that through the regulations made under clause 65, setting quality standards, and under the duty placed on undertakers in clause 52 to provide wholesome water.

We propose a much tighter legal requirement than that in the amendments, as wholesomeness extends beyond the standards specified in the directive. To leave the Lords amendments in the Bill would create doubt about the undertakers' responsibility in that very important respect. We already have a perfectly adequate mechanism in the Bill to ensure that supplies that do not yet meet the requirements are brought up to standard as quickly as practicable—the enforcement duty placed on the Secretary of State in clause 20. That clause was amended in another place to put it beyond doubt that it is fully consistent with European law, and that it has the agreement of the House as well as the European Commission. Water undertakers must agree to take steps acceptable to the Secretary of State to secure or facilitate compliance with Community directive requirements. If they do not, I am bound to take enforcement action.

We are all in agreement that the necessary steps should be taken as quickly as possible, and the Government have given a public commitment to do so. On 15 May, my noble Friend Lord Hesketh made an explicit commitment in another place that I am happy to repeat. The Government are fully committed to complying with the drinking water directive and will accept undertakings under clause 20(5)(b) only if satisfied that they contain proposals for achieving compliance as quickly as possible, taking the practicalities into account.

The amendments ignore the question of practicality. Large investment programmes cannot be carried out overnight for very practical reasons that have nothing to do with the money involved. We all agree that we must avoid, for example, severe disruption of water supplies while work is carried out. We must avoid putting people's health at risk during that time, and ensure that necessary planning approvals have been obtained. We must allow time for projects to be planned and designed properly. In the case of nitrate and pesticides, we must ensure that new technology has been tested and proven. So far, it has not. Those essential factors must be taken into account, which means that timetables must be set for every individual case. A single date for compliance across the country

[Mr. Ridley]

would completely ignore that requirement. In some cases it would mean slowing down improvements, and in others jeopardising the health of customers. I am sure that that is not something that the House would want to happen.

The amendments are flawed for other reasons. Regulations made under them would automatically entitle customers to a payment if any of the quality standards was exceeded after 1993, which ignores certain scientific facts. It is not technically possible to guarantee 100 per cent. compliance with standards that have nothing to do with health but affect the taste and appearance of the water. Standards for colour, turbidity and iron can be exceeded simply because of a change in water pressure or because of an unexpectedly large demand for water, perhaps due to a fire in the area. In such instances there is no justification for making payments to customers, as the undertaker is not technically able to do anything about them—and the change in quality may barely be noticeable. Nor would there be any justification for making payments if the customer caused the breach by using, for example, excessive nitrate or pesticides on his land in the catchment area of the water source and then claimed compensation for the effect that it had on his water supply.

Amendments Nos. 62 to 64 are impracticable because they give enormous scope for dispute over whether payment is due. If the lead standard is breached there could be a dispute as to whether it was due to the customer's or the undertaker's lead pipe, or even over how the sample was taken. If the microbiological standard is breached in one sample, there could be a dispute as to whether it was due to contamination in the house or at the treatment works. If the sample was taken by the customer, for how much would it count? What if analysis showed that the water was just over the standard? Even the best analytical technique is not very precise. There are many other common instances of how disputes and injustices could arise.

The basis of our guaranteed standard scheme is that it will be simple to operate and easy for the customer to understand, and will provide a no-nonsense form of redress. The Lords amendments would produce the opposite.

I apologise for taking so much time, but it was necessary to explain the Government's position in respect of both groups of amendments. To sum up, amendments Nos. 62 to 64 are flawed, impracticable and impossible to implement. The House would be wise not to agree with them.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for agreeing to take the group headed by amendment No. 62 with that headed by amendment No. 44, because it is right to debate the effect of the directive's implementation at the same time as we discuss its transposition into our own legislation.

The Secretary of State's concluding remarks do not convince me that he is taking the problem of drinking water quality seriously enough. The problems that concern the European Community and consumers in this country are not related simply to appearance and taste but range from lead in Scotland, nitrate in Norwich and aluminium in Bradford, Calderdale and other parts of Yorkshire, to nitrate in Redbridge, and to problems in Birmingham in the west midlands as well. None of them is a minor problem, and they all usually arise when there is a breakdown in the system, because the backlog in investment has not been cleared since the directive was introduced in 1980.

Opposition amendment (a) aims at exploring and suggesting ways in which defects in water supplies can be reported. The Government amendments attempt to effect the transposition of the drinking water quality directive into our own legislation. As that is something that we suggested in Committee, we welcome it—although at that time such a provision was rejected by the Minister for Water and Planning. We all accept that the directive should be incorporated in British law, but that takes us no further forward in implementing Community standards. My noble Friends in another place were able to persuade their Lordships to accept amendments to implement the directive by 1993. The Government's amendments take us no further towards achieving that goal. That is why we learned with dismay of the Government's intention to overturn the Lords amendments.

Drinking water quality is a matter of major public concern, and one that has an added dimension in terms of Britain's relationship with the EEC. It is a matter of regret that so many individuals in this country have found it necessary to voice their concern about drinking water standards to the Community because they do not believe that they can look to the Government to protect them. That aspect has prompted some of the most remarkable statements ever uttered by the Minister in Committee. Right hon. and hon. Members who did not serve on the Committee missed a number of gems. I suggest that they read *Hansard* to follow the Minister's strangely convoluted logic.

In 1980 the British Government were willing parties to an EC directive—No. 80/778/EEC—on the quality of drinking water for human consumption. That directive laid down the parameters for the maximum levels of certain substances to be permitted in drinking water, and was due to be implemented some four years ago in 1985.

8 pm

In Committee we pressed the Minister of State about his plans and expectations for meeting EC standards. Throughout our proceedings his response was somewhat mixed and contradictory, and I do not think that the Secretary of State has done much better this evening. We are told that the standards will be observed, although the Government have repeatedly used delaying tactics in Brussels to put off the evil day—as they see it—when the commitment has to be met. I suspect that they have simply been playing for time to delay the day when the EC takes further legal action against this country for non-compliance, which I fear is what it will come to in the end.

The Minister of State has promoted the idea—only in this country, not in Brussels—that the parameters of the drinking water directive of 1980 are to be relaxed. In Committee he told us that relaxation was likely, and, perhaps to match his ignorance about sewage—he said that if people could not see so much sewage that they did not want to swim in the sea, there was no danger—set himself up as a medical expert on drinking water and told us not to worry about aluminium. He told Labour Members that they were "scaremongering" when they expressed concern about aluminium levels in water and about the possible link with Alzheimer's disease. The Minister's PPS—who, unlike the Minister, is here this

evening—took comfort from the fact that the Minister was able to tell us that people were not dying. That was one of the rare contributions that he was allowed to make to the Committee proceedings.

EC officials in the relevant department in Brussels, directly responsible for the implementation and review of the parameters of the drinking water directive, have said that in no circumstances will a general relaxation of standards be allowed. There may be some clearer specifications of the individual parameters for certain pesticides, which are currently the subject of a general pesticide parameter, but the only change that the Commission seeks for aluminium is a tightening rather than a relaxation of standards. I had hoped that the Minister of State would pursue that in Brussels last week, but I do not believe that he did.

I cannot believe that the message from EC officials as to their attitude on relaxations has not been transmitted to Ministers by their officials. We can only conclude that the Minister has chosen to ignore the facts. I think that I accept the Commission's view that the Government are using the regulatory committee as an excuse for delaying tactics. We do not have even the standards aimed at in the 1980 directive, and we should ask what is the purpose of the Government's amendments if the Government will not agree a reasonable timetable to meet the directive. If, later this evening, the Government move to reject the Lords amendment on the 1993 deadline—as we understand that they will—we shall have made very little progress. The Government seem to think that it is easier to whip Members in this House than in the other place, which is no doubt why they have chosen to overturn the amendment here rather than there.

I believe that the reason why the Government will not allow the amendment to stand is that a privatised water industry will not wish to be saddled with such commitments and liabilities. That tells us that the Government's priorities are clearly decided. Their main priority is not to safeguard the drinking water supplies of the estimated 10·8 million people whose water does not meet EC standards, but to ensure that nothing stops the sale from proceeding. As interest, even in the City, is luke warm to say the least—as we heard earlier, and have read in *The Observer* and other serious newspapers—the Government want to make the British people put up with any standards to avoid damaging the prospects for the sale. If Conservative Members feel comfortable about voting for such priorities, their constituents will know where they stand. They will know that their interests are second to Conservative Members' anxiety to sell the industry and to obey the Government Whips.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: May I ask the hon. Lady two questions? First, is the Bill in its totality putting standards up or down? Secondly, what advantage would be secured by the imposition of the 1993 deadline?

Mrs. Taylor: I intend to tell the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends shortly why we need the deadline, but the totality of the Bill is certainly not intended to protect consumers or to raise standards. At an early stage we offered to support part I to establish and, indeed, strengthen the National Rivers Authority, but all our attempts were rejected by the Government. That gives a clear indication of their priorities as well as explaining their decision to vote down our proposals.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): The hon. Lady says that the Bill will not take any steps to protect the consumer, but it makes it a criminal offence to supply drinking water that is unfit for human consumption. That has never happened before. Why does the hon. Lady not talk about the Bill instead of delivering the fiction that we have been hearing for the past 15 minutes?

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman served on the Committee, although he probably did not make as many interventions in that time as he has made here. I do not think that he was taking the Bill very seriously then. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) says that the hon. Gentleman has only just come back into the Chamber. Nevertheless, he is allowed to intervene, and I gave way to him willingly. If he would care to listen, I will tell him exactly why it is important to write the 1993 deadline into the Bill.

The Government signed and agreed to the 1980 directive without dissent, and that directive should have been met in 1985. We shall vote later for the retention of the 1993 deadline not because we think it perfect, but because we wish that the Government had done more since 1980. Earlier, the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) talked about what he saw as the faults of a Labour Government, but even he will have to admit that the Conservatives have been in power since 1980 and that all the failures to abide by the 1980 directive lie at their door.

Mr. Ridley: The directive was first published in 1975, and the Labour party negotiated for four years, supporting it all the way through. Can the hon. Lady say what the Labour Government did to begin to implement it, apart from cutting investment in the water industry by 30 per cent.?

Mrs. Taylor: I freely admit that the Labour Government who left office in 1979 did nothing to implement the 1980 EC directive, but it would have been quite remarkable if we had been able to implement a directive that had not even been written.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Taylor: Perhaps I could finish this point.

I do not know what plans the Government have made to meet future directives. The last Labour Government claimed many things, but they never claimed clairvoyance or that they could meet directives which had not at that time been written.

We shall vote for the retention of the 1993 deadline. Without the deadline, progress towards implementation will slip even further. The hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), who has just left the Chamber, said that he thought that the Secretary of State was sending out the wrong signals after some of his decisions relating to consents. I think that the Secretary of State is sending all the wrong signals to the privatised water companies. They will lack any incentive—incentive and profit are what privatisation is all about—to improve the quality of their drinking water, because they will not be selling more water after privatisation. Unless we write a deadline into the Bill, the timetable will slip even further.

Mr. Riddick: The hon. Lady cleverly evaded the question about the 1975 directive by saying that the

[Mr. Riddick]

Labour Government could not take responsibility for the 1980 directive. Will she explain whether the Labour Government, who were in power between 1974 and 1979, were responsible for the capital investment cuts of 30 per cent. which took place during those years?

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman was not listening to his hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), who said that the directive was first drafted in 1975. It was not agreed until 1980.

The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) asked me to refer to capital expenditure, and I am happy to do so. I carry in my pocket the investment figures throughout the 1970s and 1980s. If the hon. Gentleman wants a copy so that he can pin it on the wall of his office to stop him asking such silly questions, I will gladly send him one. He is my own Member of Parliament and I think that he should be informed about the matter. I have the misfortune to live in his constituency—a nice place, though it is a pity about its Member of Parliament. Average investment under the last Labour Government was £1,254 million per year. Average investment under this Government is £922 million per year. I trust that the hon. Gentleman, who takes an interest in these matters and who has tried to defend the Government, will take that point on board.

The Secretary of State said that he would advise hon. Members to turn down the 1993 amendment. As he put it, and as the Minister of State put it to the Commissioner last week, the Government believe that they must turn down the 1993 deadline because it breaches EC law, since that standard should have been met in 1985. That is typical of the Minister of State's frequently observed convoluted logic. If that is the best that Ministers can do, the standard will not be met in the near future. It shows that they are not serious about the problem.

The Minister of State had his first meeting with the Commissioner in Brussels last week. I understand that it was a polite meeting—not surprisingly, since the Commissioner is a very charming man—but the Minister seems to have been unable to convince anyone in Brussels of his case that the Government are doing everything possible to reach the required standards. Similarly, he has been unable to convince Members of Parliament or the British people generally.

We shall be watching for further developments in the Commission. I am sure that potential investors in a privatised water industry will be reluctant to part with any money—assuming that the Government sell the industry and do not just give it away—if they believe that further action will be taken by the European Community because of the water industry's failure to reach the required standard.

8.15 pm

That brings me to the question of reporting standards. The European Community is receiving more and more complaints from ordinary consumers about the state of their drinking water. I understand that it has difficulty in processing all the complaints as quickly as it would like, at a time when most of those who are drinking sub-standard water do not even know that it is sub-standard—hence our amendment to the Government's amendment, which is designed to introduce a reporting system so that each year we shall quickly be able to find out where there are problems with supplies which are below EC standards and why they fail to meet those standards. Everyone has a right to be told about the state of their drinking water—and a right to expect action to be taken at the earliest possible moment to put it right.

The Minister of State and the Secretary of State have adopted a policy of keeping people in the dark, so far as possible, with regard to problems over drinking water. The Minister of State refused to give details of his discussions in Brussels. Ministers have even refused to put reasoned opinions in the House of Commons Library. They have also refused to publish responses to reasoned opinions. This is not a private matter for discussion between Ministers and Brussels. It concerns everyone in this country—certainly the 10·8 million people whose water supplies are sub-standard.

If the Secretary of State overturns the 1993 deadline, he will reduce the impact of his own amendments, starting with amendment No. 44. The Government's amendments will not convince anyone. I am certain that they will not convince the Commission that the Government are taking the problem seriously enough. If the Secretary of State rejects the 1993 deadline, he will be sending a very clear signal to the British people about what they can expect from the privatised water industry. We believe that water purity and drinking water standards should come first. That is why we shall try to insist that the 1993 deadline stays in the Bill.

Mr. Riddick: The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) told the House that I am her Member of Parliament and suggested that that might be a little unfortunate from her point of view. It is even more unfortunate from my point of view, because she is my Member of Parliament. She once turned down my offer, put in jest, that at the next general election I would vote for her to boost her majority if she would vote for me to boost mine. She turned my offer down, and I am very glad that she did. We had a good joke about it.

However, it worries me that the hon. Member for Dewsbury keeps coming out with a great deal of black propaganda and misleading information about water privatisation. As we are near-neighbours, we share the same local newspaper, the *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, and many of those misleading facts find their way into that newspaper.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): They are not facts. They are unfacts.

Hon. Members: "Faction".

Mr. Riddick: I am most grateful to my hon. Friends for improving my English. The word "faction" will suffice. The hon. Member for Dewsbury seems to spend a great deal of time running down Britain's water industry by portraying Britain as the dirty man of Europe and by suggesting that there has been no investment in the water industry in recent years. Yet the previous Labour Government cut capital investment in the water industry by some 30 per cent.

The hon. Lady was talking about the average investment between 1974 and 1979. When the Labour party came to power in 1974 it inherited the high investment levels set by the Conservative Government of 1970 to 1974. When the Labour Government left office in

1979 the level of investment had reduced considerably. The present Conservative Government have had to make up the lost ground as a direct result of the cuts imposed by the Labour Government in the late 1970s. As we know, the Conservative Government have been responsible for increasing capital expenditure by about 50 per cent. since 1980.

I am happy to support the Government in disagreeing with Lords amendments Nos. 62, 63 and 64. It amazes me that the Opposition are happy to get into bed with the European Commission, for reasons of political expediency, when it suits them. If ever the Opposition get into Government, they will regret that. There are already perfectly adequate safeguards in the Bill. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, the water plcs will have to give undertakings that they will do whatever is necessary to comply with the requirements of the EC directives. If they do not, the Secretary of State will be forced to take action.

The debate about our water industry complying with the EC directives needs to be put into perspective. The British water industry has nothing to be ashamed of, although privatisation will lead to even greater improvements and more investment because the privatised industries will be able to raise, from the private money markets, more money to invest in the industry.

When comparisons are made with the rest of Europe, the British water industry comes out pretty well. Most supplies of drinking water in Britain comply with the 66 parameters of the European Commission drinking water directive covering taste and appearance as well as safety. All European countries have difficulty reaching 100 per cent. compliance with the directive. I understand that infringement proceedings are at various stages in respect of several European countries, including Germany, Italy, France and Belgium.

If one listened to the hon. Member for Dewsbury and read all her statements in the *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, one would imagine that rivers in the United Kingdom must be the dirtiest in Europe, but the opposite is true. In England and Wales, 66 per cent. of rivers were in class 1, the highest classification. That compares with 39 per cent. for Europe as a whole. France scored only 35 per cent. Taking classes 1, good, and 2, reasonable, together, the figures become even more interesting. The United Kingdom scored 94 per cent., bettered only by the Netherlands with 95 per cent. That is certainly a lot better than Germany at 84·5 per cent., Greece at 80 per cent. and France which is estimated to score less than 80 per cent.

The proportion of domestic sewage treated in the United Kingdom was one of the highest in Europe at 83 per cent.—bettered only by Sweden, Denmark and Germany. The water industry in Britain has nothing whatever to be ashamed of and the Government have provided a great deal of investment in the industry in the past 10 years.

Mr. Raffan: Does my hon. Friend agree that our record would be even better had the Labour Government implemented part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and if they had kept a central record of sewage discharges? They never did that, so they did not know which sewage treatment works were discharging illegally. That was the extent of their concern.

Mr. Riddick: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for that helpful intervention which is absolutely true. I suspect that the Labour Government failed to do that because of incompetence, because they could not afford to invest the appropriate money in the industry and, as my hon. Friend said, because they did not care.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I must point out, for the elucidation of the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), that last week when the legal notices of the relaxation for consents under the Control of Pollution Act were published in our local newspaper, I rang up the new prototype NRA office of the Welsh water authority and asked why a sewage works in my constituency—the Drope sewage works—had been mentioned. I was advised that it had been included by mistake. The following week it appeared in the legal notice in the newspaper again by mistake. They do not know what they are doing.

Mr. Riddick: That intervention added nothing to the debate.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): May I inform the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) that I asked similar questions of the Welsh Office and the Minister seemed equally ignorant about what is happening on these derogations?

Mr. Riddick: I am chuffed that Opposition Members should imagine that I know all about events taking place in Wales. I do not, as I represent a Yorkshire constituency. The Labour Government's record was lamentable and nothing can hide that. Despite all their interventions, Opposition Members cannot hide the fact that when they were in government their record was absolutely appalling.

I conclude by pointing out that hon. Members and consumers in Yorkshire have a great deal to be proud of. The Yorkshire water authority is certainly concerned to improve the quality of the area's drinking water. New plants are being developed and are under construction. A new water treatment plant is currently commissioned somewhere in Yorkshire every six to nine months. That trend is expected to continue for another five years. One of the new treatment plants is in my constituency—at Blackmoorfoot.

If the Labour Government of 1974 to 1979 had not cut investment in the industry, we should be even further ahead. That is why 1993 is unrealistic. I am happy to support my right hon. Friend in the Lobby tonight and I hope that he will continue to point out that many of our problems today are a direct result of the lack of investment all those years ago. Although my right hon. Friend and his colleagues have done their best to improve matters over the past 10 years, we cannot do everything overnight. I certainly hope that by 1995 drinking water in Britain will be of a far higher quality than it was 10 or 15 years ago.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Having listened to the speech of the Secretary of State, we are under no delusions about the nature of the debate. Labour Members recognised the complacency that has been a feature of the past decade of Conservative control of the water industry. Listening to the Secretary of State, I almost thought that a problem had appeared in the past year and that suddenly, to everyone's surprise, the Commission had introduced a directive on water quality standards, without consultation, to be implemented within a short time.

[Mr. Win Griffiths]

The Secretary of State told us that the Government took the directive seriously, that they had a long-term programme, and that they would make improvements as quickly as possible. He then said that improvements would be made as soon as reasonably practicable. The truth is that the Secretary of State runs a mile when a deadline for work to be completed appears. His complacency is underlined by the fact that currently about 11 million people in the United Kingdom are drinking water that does not comply with European Community standards, which for some poses risks to health. The Secretary of State might not want to face that possibility, but it is true that over the past decade the Government could have complied with the directive.

8.30 pm

The Government are still insisting that 1993 is too soon to expect compliance with the directive. The Secretary of State said that the Commissioner—my former colleague in the European Parliament, Carlo Ripa di Meana—had stated that he did not expect the Government to comply with the directive overnight. The directive has been bandied about for a decade or more, and it is said that a week is a long time in politics, but I never thought that "overnight" meant four or five years, which is the Government's interpretation of the Commissioner's timescale. The Commissioner does not expect compliance overnight, or within a year or two. The date of 1 September 1993 would be acceptable to the Commission. The idea that that date cannot be included in the legislation because it is a breach of the directive is almost Jesuitical. It has not stopped the Secretary of State's colleagues giving dates in parliamentary answers, such as one that I received recently from the Welsh Office. When I asked about derogations covering the water supply in Wales, I was told:

"The need for most of the derogations should be removed by 1990 and all by 1995 at the latest."

The Welsh Office was not shy about mentioning dates.

It is interesting to note the theme of complacency in a further answer that I received. I asked the Secretary of State for Wales to give the main population centres affected by derogation in Wales and how many people were drinking water which did not meet European Community standards. The answer was that most of the supply areas were rural parts of Wales—Gwynedd, north Dyfed and south Powys—and showed that the Welsh Office did not have a clue about the number of people who were drinking water which did not meet European Community standards. Such was and is the Government's concern. The same level of concern was reflected in the speech of the Secretary of State this evening. He said that the Government would comply with the directive one day, "but for goodness sake do not give us a deadline, even if it is four years away."

Complacency is apparent throughout the water industry in Wales. When I asked about the discharging of effluent from sewage treatment works, I simply asked the Secretary of State to list the relaxations and amendments that the Welsh water authority had requested. I was told that the applications made by the Welsh water authority "will reflect the current performance of individual works". —[*Official Report*, 12 June 1989; Vol. 154, c. *306*.]

When I further asked the Secretary of State which applications would result in discharge standards being relaxed or tightened, I was told on 15 June that the Welsh Office was unaware whether applications would improve the position or worsen it and that eventually a copy of the Secretary of State's reply would be placed in the Library. To date, that reply has not surfaced.

I should have thought that it would be simple for a Government who boast so many achievements to comply with the EC directive in four years' time. I hope that even at this late stage the Secretary of State for the Environment will realise that all consumers would welcome such a commitment. Why is the Secretary of State not prepared to make such a commitment? The only argument that I could pick out from his speech was that if the directive was complied with by 1993 it would cause disruption of the water supply. He did not offer a date by which the work could be completed without disruption, but I wonder whether he knows when the directive will be complied with. If he does, he should share that secret with us, with the consumers and with the prospective purchasers of the water authorities.

The Secretary of State may have given the game away in an aside some time ago when answering my question on compliance with the directives on drinking and bathing water quality. I suggested that it might cost about £2 billion or £3 billion to comply with both directives in full. The Secretary of State said that it would probably cost much more than that. A recent estimate suggests that it could be as much as £15 billion. If the Secretary of State has a figure, I should be interested to know how much it will cost to comply with the drinking and bathing water directives, particularly the drinking water directive as it is the subject of this debate. The only reason why the Secretary of State is being a shrinking violet about accepting 1993 as a reasonable date to meet the directive is that the cost would be so exorbitant that no right-minded person would dare to invest in shares in the water authorities. If the amendment is accepted, I hope that the full costs of compliance with the directive will be published in the prospectus to be issued for the sale of the water authorities.

I do not believe that the Commission will accept a deadline beyond September 1993. That assertion is backed up by considering the experience of the Italians. The Commission maintained that, for one major scheme in the Po valley, the problems should be solved within two years. The Italian authorities decided that it would be in the interests of public health for that two-year programme to be met even though it meant a huge investment in the Po valley to deal with the nitrate problem. What is sauce for Italy will be sauce for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ridley: Is the hon. Gentleman content with the fact that the Italians appear to be confining their activities to the Po valley and leaving the rest of the country undisturbed?

Mr. Griffiths: That is not true. The Po valley project was undertaken because it was the top priority for the Italian Government. In the coming year the Italian Government, after discussions with the Commission, will be introducing further programmes to meet the directive before 1993.

If the Secretary of State were truly concerned about the health of some 11 million people in the United Kingdom,

he would gladly grasp the date of September 1993 as a reasonable one by which privatised water companies should aim to achieve compliance.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I support my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in disagreeing with Lords amendment No. 63. I have not always had the pleasure of supporting my right hon. Friend in such matters. He will recall that, from time to time, we have differed on certain issues in connection with the Bill. In this instance, however, he is absolutely right to bring this matter to a halt with a vote in this House.

Much has been made of the fact that the directive in question was published in 1980 after about five years of draft status. As I recall it, much time was spent after 1980 seeking derogation from and changes to the directive. I even remember playing a modest part in that. At the time, the water industry would have found it virtually impossible to meet all the conditions laid down in the directive, and the United Kingdom water industry was not alone in that predicament. Water industries throughout the Community are still in major default of the directive as it currently stands. Litigation is under way in most Community countries, with the possible exception of Portugal.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Surely the hon. Gentleman is not advocating that because the situation is bad in other countries we should not bother to hurry up and set a deadline to meet the directive here?

Sir Giles Shaw: That intervention scarcely deserves any reply. Every country is having difficulty in meeting the directive and I commend the bravery of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who suddenly determined that the directive should be accepted in full despite the fact that the United Kingdom water industry would have extreme difficulty in achieving compliance with all its aspects.

Within the directive, 66 different elements have to be met. The vast majority, as members of the Standing Committee know, have to do with matters of appearance and colour rather than matters affecting health or toxicity. The elements which affect those two aspects, however, must be met. The vast majority of water undertakings currently meet the vast majority of the elements in the directive. We are dealing with not wholesale misapplication of the directive, but the misapplication of certain portions of the directive which cannot yet be met, in most cases because the water undertakings have been starved of capital investment for many years. I do not lay the blame for that on the Labour Administration alone. Water undertakings, whether under municipal ownership or other guises, have never had the renewal of assets so essential for a modern distribution and treatment system.

8.45 pm

The particular issue before the House now is whether the 1993 recommendation of their Lordships should proceed without further ado. That recommendation would bring forward the application of the entire directive by two years. The difference between 1993 and 1995 would be superficial at most. It would not make a great deal of difference to the investing public who, in this instance, have to look at a long-term investment in an industry which will have greater control over price, profitability and various other activities than any other industry brought into the private sector in recent years. I do not believe that it is too great an exaggeration to say that. This is hardly a privatisation of the kind that other industries have enjoyed. The water industry will be moved from the public sector into a controlled private sector. The limits on the activities of the privatised industry will be much stricter than those which currently exist in the public sector. The Opposition should recognise that.

The 1995 arrangement agreed to by my right hon. Friend in discussion with the Community is absolutely the earliest date at which all the elements in the directive can be met because of the scale of investment required and the manner in which the directive will be applied. In future, 100 per cent. of samples of water content, rather than an average sample, will have to meet the directive.

The industry has had to look with real concern at just how much would be involved not just in investment, but in the management of the undertaking while that investment is made. Because of that combination of factors, the time scale is crucial. It is not a matter of backing down from the directive, going for the sales material to support privatisation or seeking to undermine public confidence in the health of British water—rather the industry is having to embark, within a relatively short time, on an entirely new method of measurement and a higher standard of filtering and refining its products. At the same time it must supply the entire United Kingdom with potable water, day in, day out. It is not too much to ask that 1995 be the date for such a programme.

Mr. Livsey: We are deliberating on one of the key issues of the Bill. We are trying to reach across an impossible chasm. We must raise the environmental standard of drinking water and try to keep down prices to the consumer while at the same time the Government's objective is to make the industry sufficiently attractive to investors. I appreciate the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) about the time limit, which is crucial in respect of the three objectives that I have highlighted. How can the gap be bridged when so much capital investment has to be made within a specific time?

The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) mentioned a number of figures relating to the amount of investment which might be required to clean up the water industry. One such figure is £6 billion. That is an awful lot of money, but if the Government are serious about meeting EEC water standards they must set an investment target. One would have thought that the Lords amendment set a reasonable target. The problem is the history, which has been described in exchanges from the Dispatch Boxes earlier in the debate about who did what and when. The problem was caused by a lack of investment in the water industry which was part of Treasury policy. There is a maxim that one starves the industry first by not funding it adequately and then finds reasons to privatise it. That is what has happened to the water industry.

The previous investment programme has been strangled by the Treasury. The lack of investment has caused the Government to say that the only way round the problem is that, as they have saved so much money which could have been spent putting matters right, they now have to privatise the industry to try to find other sources of

[Mr. Livsey]

money for necessary investment. That is an abrogation of the responsibility of managing a public industry such as water.

Lords amendment No. 64, with which the Secretary of State disagrees, puts the Government on the hook and in this debate we must not let them off the hook. Lords amendment No. 64 says:

"Where no such agreement has been reached by the date referred to in paragraph (a) above, 1st September 1993."

As other speakers have said, that is a perfectly reasonable date to which to adhere. If the Government put their mind to it, the industry could adhere to the EC directives by that time. It has already been mentioned that 11 million people in England and Wales have drinking water that does not meet the EC directive on drinking water quality standards. That is lamentable. I should have thought that any Government who accepted a decent amount of responsibility would seek to put that right as early as possible. Surely a date four years hence is not too close.

It is realistic to expect that Lords amendment No. 64 should be met. We must think about the quality of drinking water of those 11 million consumers. One million households are supplied with water with a nitrate content in excess of EC standards and nitrate protection zones have been identified in different parts of the country. Friends of the Earth has found breaches of pesticide limits in almost 300 water sources and samples. Those matters affect human health and should be of concern to us all.

There are ways of getting around those problems by improved technology and by overcoming the necessity to apply as much nitrogen as was applied in the past. We could produce new products less lethal than some of the pesticides which one used now or have only recently been banned. Solvents are also becoming a problem and evidence is emerging that they are accumulating in aquifers as well. Trace elements such as aluminium have become an increasing problem, with more than 40 areas of the country falling outside the EC standard. That is the challenge that would face any Government in cleaning up drinking water supplies. The House of Lords has set a reasonable target of 1993 by which the standards should be met.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): The Lords amendments deal with standards and the date by which it is possible to achieve them. Ninety per cent. of our rivers are in the top two standards. I have consulted my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) on the matter. I must ask my hon. and learned Friend the Minister whether we always get our sense of priorities right. One or two rivers are still dirty, such as the Rother, which was mentioned often in Committee, and the Mersey, but at the same time the Thames has been much cleaned up. I wonder whether my hon. and learned Friend has got matters the right way round. Many years ago, the House had to rise early for the summer recess because the Thames used to stink. Perhaps it might have been done the other way round.

I regret that the questions asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) of the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) have still not been answered. She was asked how the previous Labour Government discharged their responsibilities for monitoring pollution by sewage treatment works when they kept no records of the adequacy of their performance. He also asked why the Labour Government kept details of the discharge consent applications secret from the public and refused to let the public participate in the process of granting them.

The Opposition are determined to show themselves as green, despite an appalling record that included 30 per cent. cuts in capital expenditure. Their concern did not extend to the Committee stage. If one examines the Committee proceedings, there is barely a mention of concern about these matters—at least, at the appropriate time. It seems that the Labour party wishes to do away with the House of Lords, but in this instance and many others, unless it had had that long stop to bring up these issues, they would not have been debated at all, despite all the time available. At least the Lords raised these issues.

Mr. Michael: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that the Committee stage was guillotined, truncating debate on many matters of great importance?

Mr. Knapman: I was a member of that Committee and I would not call 180 hours of debate truncated, although the hon. Gentleman is entitled to his opinion.

Investment in water and sewerage works has always been delayed while they have been in the public sector. It is, after all, much easier to say that they have been there since Victorian times and that another year or two will not matter, so there is no need to bother. It is probably true to say that there has been some delay in those matters under Governments of all complexions. It is equally true to say that the rivers Rother and Mersey did not become polluted last week or in 1979. They have been polluted for many decades and, at long last, there is a chance that they will be cleaned and that drinking water quality will be improved.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister has acknowledged that vast sums need to be spent and he has never hidden the fact that water charges will need to rise above the rate of inflation to meet that expenditure. However, I remind their Lordships that passing an Act in this place does not take any practical steps towards achieving better standards. Our discussions do not take any practical steps towards modernising one sewage works, one water works, any old pipes or faulty stop cocks. It is little use to pass Acts if they cannot be complied with and passing Acts that cannot be complied with can only bring this place into disrepute. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is right to say that these matters must be determined by what is practical.

I suspect that the true costs will be measured in many hundreds of millions of pounds. New works should be not only built, but designed to the highest standards, and in some cases planning permission will have to be obtained. Even if every firm of builders and civil engineers in this country were to set about such tasks—since my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has said that an extra £12 billion will be spent on the roads, it is not a likely event—complying with the standards would take considerable time. The only chance of the standards being complied with is if private funds are introduced; without them the works would not be undertaken.

My hon. and learned Friend's proposals are in line with the EEC's drinking water directive. Hon. Members can see in the Library a letter from Carlo Ripa di Meana, which states:

"We had expressed concern about the provisions of clause 20(5)(b) and the scope it gave the Secretary of State to allow

water companies to continue to supply water which did not meet all the requirements of the Drinking Water Directive. I am pleased to say that these discussions have now come to a satisfactory conclusion. The amendments which you have tabled to clause 20, along with the statement which I understand to have been made when introducing these amendments in the House of Lords, satisfy me that the UK Government intends to rectify any deficiencies in water supplies as quickly as possible taking certain practicalities into account."

That is the crux of the matter and that is the view of the European Commission. The letter is in the Library for all hon. Members to see.

9 pm

In Committee my hon. and learned Friend said that he was not seeking merely to comply with the European Commission's directive. At column 1045 he stated:

"The Commission has proposed the setting up of a committee of adaptation to review standards, which were drawn up without any proper toxicological basis. Indeed, some concentrations are standard across the board. The changes that the United Kingdom Government seek to achieve relate to the toxicological properties of different substances."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D;* 14 February 1989, c. 1045-46.]

We seek to achieve even higher standards than has been suggested by the European Commission.

Can my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State confirm that, as regards the wholesomeness of water, we propose a much tighter legal requirement than that proposed in the European directive? I am sure that the Bill contains a perfectly adequate mechanism for ensuring that the supplies that do not yet meet the requirements are brought up to standard as quickly as possible. I believe that my right hon. Friend has said that, but I did not catch exactly what he said. Will he confirm that that enforcement duty will be placed on the Secretary of State by clause 20?

With those points in mind, I say to my right hon. Friend, "Keep on being practical and at long last standards will be improved."

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) has left the Chamber because he referred to the bravery of the Secretary of State and that reminded me of the first occasion when I met the hon. Gentleman. He had just finished swimming in the sea off Sellafield after a major radiation leak. The personal bravery of the hon. Gentleman is therefore not in question, but obviously his judgment must be. However, I must admit that he is looking well and repeat that I am sorry that he is not in his place at the moment.

I shall concentrate on the issue of drinking water quality and compliance by 1993 or by another date agreed by the EEC. Tonight the Government are trying to overturn sensible and well-thought-out amendments that have been put forward by their Lordships. The Lords amendments propose that drinking water in the United Kingdom should conform to standards required by EC directive 80/778 by one of two dates: either 1 December 1993—on which we have tended to concentrate this evening—or by a date agreed mutually between the Secretary of State and the EEC Commission.

By their actions this evening it seems that the Government are saying that the EEC have told them that it is not prepared to wait any longer for the Government to take action and that they cannot come to a mutually agreed date before 1993. The inference is that the EEC is telling the Government to get on with compliance immediately, or at least quickly. If that is a wrong interpretation, I am sure that the Secretary of State or the Minister of State will tell us so. Perhaps the Minister will tell us what the EEC Commissioner has told him because the Government are refusing to put in the Library answers to our questions.

It is important that Britain's water is cleaned up. The directive was agreed in 1980. We have heard a lot about the Labour Government not agreeing to the directive, but we were not in power then. The directive became law in 1982 and its standards should have been achieved by 1985. What faith can we have in a Secretary of State who tells the House that at some time in the future the Government will comply with the directive when the Government have been breaking the law for nearly five years?

The Government have not been able to convince the EEC Commissioners or the people of this country. Indeed, a substantial minority of our population now has to put up with suspect water. It was only recently that Mr. Michael Carney, the secretary of the Water Authorities Association —who will probably be Sir Michael before too long— admitted that 10·8 million consumers are affected by water that does not meet the standards required by the EEC. Some of that water contains dangerous levels of lead, nitrates, aluminium and pesticides—a list to which we must now add protein, as I understand that people in the Thames area had to put up with worms coming through their taps. That situation was described yesterday evening on the television programme, "Spitting Image", on which a worm said that the only danger lay in drinking the water.

It is not only the Thames area that suffers. My own region, the North-west water authority region, has similar problems. According to a parliamentary answer of 7 February, areas whose water supplies currently failed to meet the standards set out in the European Community directive on the quality of drinking water included parts of Chester, parts of Congleton, all of Southport, Formby, the High Peak district, Stockport, Bolton, Tameside, Oldham, Rochdale, Rossendale, Burnley, Hyndburn, Carlisle district, excluding the city, the Eden district, Osmotherley, Urswick, Barrow in Furness, Lancaster, Ribble valley, Fylde district and Fleetwood. It would have been easier to name the areas that were getting satisfactory water. We have some terrible problems in the north-west.

On 5 June my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and I were in a valley called Mungrisdale in the Lake District. There we were in the most beautiful part of the country on a beautiful early summer's day, yet we realised that, according to EEC standards, the water in that area is not fit for villagers to drink. That was during the European election campaign. In Cumbria, as in the rest of the country, water privatisation was a matter of major political controversy and I believe that it was water privatisation that brought down the Conservative majority in Cumbria and North Lancashire from 23,000 to 2,000. When that swing is repeated at the general election, the Labour party will capture the town of Barrow and the city of Lancaster.

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend has referred to the European constituency of Cumbria and North Lancashire. He will know that there was considerable concern among those living on the Fylde coast about the proposed long sewer outfall proposed at Rossall point. Having addressed a public meeting there, I feel sure that my hon. Friend's

[Mr. Pike]

claim that concern about water was one of the reasons why we considerably reduced the Conservative's majority is correct.

Mr. Martlew: I agree with my hon. Friend, and I should not be surprised if we took Fylde at the next general election if the Government continue as they are.

No doubt Conservative Members would argue that the fact that there was a debate and falling out among leading Conservatives helped to lose the Conservatives the European elections. But it was not the washing of dirty linen in public that caused the problems; it was the fact that they left the dirty water for the people to drink.

The Prime Minister has been saying at the Royal show at Stoneleigh that the Government propose to introduce a food Bill to try to cope with the country's epidemic of food poisoning. Does she not realise that it is no good getting that part of the chain right if, when the food goes into people's kitchens, it is washed with polluted water?

I hope that the Government will have the sense to accept the Lords amendments or, better still, decide that for the sake of the country and the Conservative party they should abandon the Bill altogether.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I was surprised to hear the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) suggest that the Government were complacent in some way. It seems to me that the Bill shows precisely how seriously the Government take the water standards—indeed it introduces the most major programme this century to improve water standards. I still have not heard the answers to the horrible questions about the horrible record of the Labour Government. Perhaps the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael)—who is not very good at answering questions, as we discovered in Committee, although he is pleasant enough—will do his best to answer them later.

When we consider Lords amendments Nos. 62 to 64, we must distinguish between willing the end and willing the means. I fear that among those who have proposed 1993 as the date there might be a category of people who wish simply to advocate a futile gesture and the idea that we should simply include 1993 in the Bill and that, Parliament having spoken, it will somehow happen. That is not worth taking seriously.

Another category of people may want 1993 to be included in the Bill as a flabby obligation. Contrary to what we have heard from Opposition Members, such a date will cause legal difficulties. We have no right under EEC rules to introduce that date. What will be the effect of doing so? An EEC directive already exists on this matter. What will happen if we try to put our own EEC directive date into our legislation? Can we approve or gain EEC approval for parts of the water industry which comply with the 1980 directive if we include 1993? Those are questions which Opposition Members should consider seriously instead of being devoted to creating work for lawyers like me.

I fear that there is a third category of people who want to include that date in the Bill. If they get their way, including such a date would be a recipe for short cuts by the water industry. That would be very serious. It is wrong even to suggest including that date in the Bill if we do not will the means as well as the ends.

My colleagues have referred to the practicalities of this provision. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning will not be surprised to learn that I am not prepared to support any measure which suggests that we can short-cut our planning procedures, soggy as they are. The House should not support such provisions. The projects required to implement the directive must be properly designed. That is an important step which has been taken in many parts of the water industry, but it remains to be taken in other areas.

We are told by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that new technology in respect of nitrates and pesticides must be proven. It is no use laughing those matters off because the use of chemicals in water is highly dangerous and delicate. For example, I have been promoting efforts in my constituency to deal with scivalium posticatum—as Mr. Speaker will know, that is the Blandford fly, which has been causing serious problems in the rivers of my constituency. The answer to that problem apparently lies in the use of a chemical called bacillus thuringiensis, which may have serious implications. It must be tested, and that takes a great deal of time. Similarly, the problems with nitrates and pesticides, which we should have discussed at greater length in this debate, must be considered seriously. A deadline of 1993 might be acceptable if we could be absolutely certain that compliance could be achieved and all the practicalities dealt with. Otherwise, the present position is much more in favour of high standards and ensuring that the practicalities are observed.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) said that we should not let the Government off the hook. The Government are and will remain on the hook because of the existence of the directive. It could be argued that introducing the 1993 deadline would let the Government off the hook. I accept the present obligations, and I accept that, like every other EEC country, we are late in doing what should be done. It is up to the House to ensure that the Government do their job in keeping the momentum going. That is a far better way to proceed than trying to introduce an artificial date and ignoring the real practicalities involved in achieving the high standards that we all want.

9.15 pm

Mrs. Mahon: I am disgusted at the way in which the Government have consistently guillotined any debate on the Bill. If we had had a chance to debate it properly, we might have considered clause 60, which refers to private water supplies and is of particular interest to me. With the aid of a European Commission study contract, Calderdale environmental health department, which is in my local authority area, investigated the quality of water provided by private supplies in the district. It appears that 5,164 properties in Calderdale were using private supplies at the time of the study. That is 2·7 per cent. of the population. For obvious reasons, the Government were not very pleased with us for doing that study.

The environmental health department in Calderdale found that many problems relating to the quality of water in private supplies were caused through a lack of maintenance, investment and knowledge. The parameters that were considered of relevance to the water quality study in Calderdale were the main ones that are applied everywhere. They are copper, lead, and microbiological

parameters—total coliforms and faecal coliforms. The sampling programme was organised to ensure that at least one sample was obtained from each private supply. It was found that 91 per cent. of samples failed to comply with the directive. They even found a dead cow in one supply.

It is obvious that the quality of water from those supplies was well below the south-east standard. Our public water supply problems, particularly that of aluminium, are not nearly as bad as those of private supplies. The most effective method of achieving compliance with the directive would be to take private supplies into the public sector. Of course, with this Bill, it will not be possible to do that.

I should like the Minister to spend a couple of minutes explaining what will happen to private supplies. Who will pay for them? What will he do? Clause 60 tells us a little about his intentions for private supplies but, because the matter has not been debated in great detail, we are not sure what will happen. What programme will the Government bring forward to ensure that those 5,164 properties in Calderdale receive water that complies with EEC regulations?

Mr. Leigh: I will keep my remarks brief as other hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. From a practical point of view, the more I listen to the debate the more I am convinced about the lack of wisdom in enshrining Community directives in our legislation. We have heard about the river Po—*[Interruption.]* I ask the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) to allow me to continue my remarks.

They say that Italians do not mind signing Community directives because they have no intention of carrying them out. They say that the Germans like to sign up because they have already done it. They say that Mediterranean countries do not mind signing them because they want us to pay for them. We are the only people with the problem. We will comply with and pay for Community directives. It was a Labour Government who spent five years getting the thing ready, and the Community directive sums up so much of what is wrong with the Community. There are great intentions but, as we have heard, not one country has succeeded in carrying out that directive nor, I suspect, will they. It is one thing to sign a directive for the sake of guidance, which is what we have done, but to enshrine it in legislation is something different.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leigh: No, because I shall draw my remarks to a rapid conclusion so that other hon. Members can contribute.

The debate has been going on for an hour and a half. Is it not extraordinary that, with the exception of my right hon. Friend who spoke first, we have heard nothing from Opposition Members about clauses 20, 52 and 60? That is part of the black propaganda that the Labour party is trying to put out about the Bill. It is ignoring the fact that the Bill will achieve environmental safeguards that we have never had. We have never had anything akin to clause 52. We have never laid down in legislation that we will insist on wholesome water. We have never had legislation such as is contained in clauses 60 and 65 in which we insist on quality standards, or clause 20, where we insist on enforcement. Undertakers will have to go to the Secretary of State and say how they intend to comply with the EEC directive. All those matters are contained in the Bill. Lord Hesketh made it clear in the other place that we intend to hold water undertakers to account.

So much of what we have heard does not relate to what is contained in the Bill—*[Interruption.]* Of course, it is good politics. The Labour party is trying to convince the British people that we will privatise the water authorities so that profit will be put before people—*[Interruption.]* They are all cheering. Opposition Members are rising to the fly cast over the Benches, as happened during 180 hours in Committee. As they try to mislead the British people into believing this nonsense, they are ignoring what is in the Bill. For the first time we are setting up a national environmental protection agency and enforcement procedures. We are taking practical and sensible steps to comply with the EEC directive. That is what we intend to do, and why we should resist this Lords amendment.

Mr. Morley: I have heard nothing in the debate to convince me that the Government cannot reach those standards by the date set down in the EEC directive. It is insulting to the Members in the other place to suggest that they have not taken into account the arguments and the practicalities of achieving those standards. I do not doubt that, because of the gross underinvestment in the water industry in the past 10 years under the Government, it will be difficult to achieve those standards. Under the last Labour Government, on average more money was invested in the industry than in the past 10 years. Conservative Members should hang their heads in shame at being party to such figures. It is a disgrace. Why is it that in the past 10 years the actual increase in water prices has been higher than the rate of inflation? Where has that profit gone? It does not seem to have been invested in the water industry, where it was needed. It seems to have gone to the Government as a form of taxation.

It may be that to achieve the required water quality standards by 1993 enormous resources will have to be switched to the task. For example, there may have to be zero profits for those years while resources are directed towards ensuring that our drinking water quality standards meet the directive, but that is not possible in a privatised industry. That is why we have been arguing that those standards will not be achieved by privatisation, because profits will always be put first. That is the main criterion.

I have not heard anyone, apart from the Government and the Water Authorities Association, say that those standards cannot be met. Of course, all the chairmen of those authorities have been appointed by the Government and they stand to do very nicely out of privatisation, as chairmen of other former public industries and public service sectors have done. I do not believe that the association's letter to every Member of Parliament has any credibility because its members have a completely vested interest. It is trying to defend the political direction of those who put the chairmen where they are today and should be disregarded.

The important issue is that my constituents should be assured that problems such as high nitrate levels in the water supply will be tackled by the Government. We know that for any progress to be made in tackling nitrate levels, the Government have to be dragged along, kicking and screaming, by the EEC. That had to happen before they were prepared to do anything at all. I want to see action in tackling water supply standards and eradicating pesticides

[Mr. Morley]

in our water supply. That is why we need a target date. A directive was agreed in 1980, but the Government know that if they try to meet the required standards they will not attract investors to buy the water authorities. They are placing their ideology of selling off the water authorities into the private sector before quality standards and the safety of our people.

Mr. Raffan: I am glad that the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has returned to the Chamber. I wanted to say to her face that her opening speech in this debate was the most disreputable that I have ever heard throughout our consideration of the Bill, whether in Committee or in the Chamber. She said, as a statement of fact, that the Government do not care at all about the quality of drinking water. She contended that the Government care only about selling off the water authorities.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I stand by that.

Mr. Raffan: Opposition Members dance to the bait that is thrown to them. The hon. Lady presented a complete distortion of the truth, and she knows it.

Like the hon. Member for Dewsbury, I was a member of the Committee which considered the Bill. I was asked at one stage to comment on a radio interview that she had given. She did not know that that would happen. The interview that she gave bore no relation to anything set out in the Bill. She has distorted the truth again this evening in impugning the Government's motives. The Government have incorporated the drinking water directive in legislation for the first time and made it a criminal offence to supply drinking water that is unfit for human consumption. Under the Government, the water authorities are embarking on a massive capital spending programme of £1 billion to improve water infrastructure and thus water quality.

This evening we saw the hon. Lady draw from her handbag the scruffy piece of paper that she brought out every so often in Committee. She prefers to give average spending figures for obvious reasons. The fact is that the Labour Government cut capital spending on water infrastructure by 30 per cent. in the last three years they were in power. The hon. Lady cannot get away from that.

Mrs. Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raffan: I will give way in a moment. I have not finished yet.

However many times the hon. Lady produces that scruffy piece of paper from her handbag, she cannot get away from the fact that the Labour Government cut capital spending in the last three years they were in office.

Mrs. Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Raffan: I have not finished yet. I ask the hon. Lady to restrain herself. She had a big bite of the cake earlier. She must give others a chance to contribute to the debate. Some of us want to talk about facts rather than fiction.

The Government are presiding over a massive capital spending programme. In an extremely eloquent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) described the process that we are undertaking as moving the water industry from the public sector, where it has been loosely constrained and loosely regulated, into the private sector, where it will be subject to much tighter regulation and monitoring than ever before. That is a fact. Indeed, some Opposition Members have today acknowledged that with the setting up of the National Rivers Authority there will be much tighter control and regulation producing significant environmental advances.

Mrs. Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman help the House by defining what he regards as a "massive capital programme"? Is he aware that the Government's investment programme from 1979 to 1986 has been lower —for the most part, much lower—than even the worst years under the Labour Government? It took seven years to get back to the Labour Government's worst year. That says a great deal about the problems created by the lack of investment under this Government.

9.30 pm

Mr. Raffan: That is a distortion. The more the hon. Lady is challenged, the more she distorts.

I am glad that Welsh Members are present as they can confirm that there has been almost a doubling of capital expenditure by the Welsh water authority——

Mr. Win Griffiths: It was needed.

Mr. Raffan: It was desperately needed because of the years of neglect under the Labour Government. The Welsh water authority has the longest——

Mr. Griffiths *rose*——

Mr Raffan: I am not giving way. I am finishing a sentence. I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman because he, too, has already had a bite of the cake. He should remain quiet and let me make my point. I am well aware that what I am saying is unpalatable to the Opposition. It is fit for human consumption, but I am not sure that it is fit for the Opposition consumption. After all, they do not like facts—they have been dealing in fiction all night. The fact is that the Government have massively increased public spending by 50 per cent. since they came to power and have a programme stretching years ahead——

Mr. Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Raffan: I have made it clear that I will not give way again—*[Interruption.]* I was generous in giving way earlier —[HON. MEMBERS:"Give way."] All right, I will give way, but I do not want to take up too much time.

Mr Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman claims to have close knowledge of the Welsh water authority. If so, he must know that one of the major arguments put forward by its chairman for accepting privatisation is that it will release him from the constraints of capital spending imposed by the Government—a view that he has expressed many times.

Mr. Raffan: It is not that at all. The hon. Gentleman is wrong again. I have talked often to Mr. John Elfed Jones, the chairman of the Welsh water authority, who wants to be released from the possible nightmare—although it is a fantasy—of a future Labour Government. He does not want a repeat of what happened in the last three years the Labour party was in power. Because the Labour Government so feared electoral unpopularity, they took the easy way out and cut capital rather than current spending when they had to crawl, humiliated, to the

International Monetary Fund in 1976. The chairman of the Welsh Water Authority knows the position. He knows that he will be able to borrow more money, more cheaply on the money market as a result of the Bill and thus accelerate the authority's capital programme.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: What about the Conservatives' Euro-seats?

Mr. Raffan: The hon. Lady brings in Euro-seats as a distraction. I do not remember the Labour candidate in north Wales mentioning the Bill. Indeed, he did not mention much to do with Europe at all. I doubt whether he even knew that the European drinking water directive existed.

As usual, I wish to be constructive, and in the few minutes remaining to me I shall refer to some of the points to which the hon. Lady failed to respond in my right hon. Friend's opening speech. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made an important point about the practical problems of specific dates due to the varying programmes for capital works. We cannot expect all of them to be completed or finalised at the same time. My right hon. Friend mentioned the possible disruption of water supplies which would occur if there were an acceleration of the programmes. The hon. Lady did not respond to that point.

Another important point is what has been referred to as dynamic changes. That refers to the long-term leaking of nitrates, mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker), the introduction of new herbicides and pesticides and the problems that they will create. Water supplies which currently comply with the directive might not comply in future due to the long-term leaking of nitrates.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey pointed out that no EEC country complies with the directive—all are guilty of infringements except Portugal, which has had an extension of the time in which it has to comply. Most water suppliers in this country comply with the health-related aspects of the directive. Indeed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey said, of the 66 requirements in the directive most are related to appearance and turbidity and are not health-related. We are breaching the directive mainly on appearance and turbidity. The drinking water of the 11 million people touted around by the Opposition —the lingering remnants of the SLD members and the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths)—is not unsafe, but merely not up to standard terms of appearance and turbidity. Yet the Opposition toss around a figure of 11 million people's health being adversely affected by their drinking water. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I did not say that.

Mr. Raffan: That was the clear inference to be drawn from Opposition speeches. I listened very carefully, as I always do, to the hon. Members for Bridgend and for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey).

Mr. Griffiths: Then the hon. Gentleman got it wrong again.

Mr. Raffan: From the point of view of public health, the directives' key sections concern bacteria and toxic substances. Water in England and Wales has always enjoyed very high standards of bacteriological purity. There remain only three very small water supplies which are adversely affected in that regard, and they are being quickly dealt with.

The Government propose to incorporate in their regulations under the Bill tighter standards governing lead than exist in the directive and are requiring water authorities to do even more by introducing additives in water treatment to reduce lead content. Nitrate pollution is probably the trickiest area, and the main problem is of long-term leakage of nitrate into the water supply as a result of the use of fertilisers and intensive farming. I do not understand why Labour Members go on about static dates for compliance with the Community directive when maintaining quality is a continuing process which will not end in 1993 or 1995. There may be areas where water supplies are currently free of nitrates but may be adversely affected in the future. Much research is being undertaken by water authorities in respect of denitrification processes, some of which are very complicated. My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) made an important point about the care that must be taken when adding chemicals to the water supply. This is particularly true when dealing with nitrates. The Government's proposals for the creation of water protection zones and nitrate-sensitive areas must be considered further. The Government are making considerable progress, but solutions cannot be conjured up overnight.

Aluminium pollution is constantly mentioned by Opposition Members, although it is pure scaremongering. They fail to point out that a cup of tea contains 20 to 200 times as much aluminium as the water used to make it.

Throughout the progress of the Bill, and particularly today, the Opposition have distorted the truth. The Government, through the effective provisions of the Bill —by the establishment of the National Rivers Authority, and by incorporating the Community directive into the legislation—are making clear their determination to improve the quality of our water supplies. That is something that a Labour Government never did, even when they had the chance to do so.

Mr. Michael: It is always difficult to deal with the manifest distortions introduced by the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), and as water was such a major issue in the recent European Parliament election in north Wales I am surprised that his remarks should be so far-reaching. I shall first correct the hon. Gentleman's remarks concerning Welsh Water. We know only of an apologetic plea by Welsh Water that it would be free from the constraints of the Conservative Government in terms of investment by the private sector, but Welsh Water's main objective was clearly set out in a letter to all its employees from its chairman, Mr. John Elfed Jones. It stated:

"You should know that it is the unanimous opinion of the Board that the interests of both consumers and the employees of Welsh Water are best served by NOT proceeding with privatisation of the Welsh Water Authority."

His letter concluded:

"I very much hope that the Government will heed the views of the Board of Welsh Water and that privatisation will not take place."

Mr. Raffan: When was it dated?

Mr. Michael: Mr. Jones was later somewhat pressurised by Ministers, but that letter expressed the unanimous view

[Mr. Michael]

of the board of Welsh Water—*[Interruption.]*—and shouting by Conservative Members will not change the truth of that.

The debate has inevitably been narrow in its scope, but the concerns are basic and of major importance. As has happened with monotonous consistency during the passage of this outrageous Bill, the Government failed to make their case, appeared appallingly complacent, and were made to look ridiculous in discussing the subject of water quality. To describe the Bill as a consumer measure is as ludicrous as calling Count Dracula a dependable agent of public health. To claim that the Bill has been brought in specially to improve water quality is even dafter. Labour Members are seeking to ensure decent standards of water quality and to present practical protection measures. As with so many other aspects of the Bill, the Secretary of State can defend the Government's position only by weaving a web of byzantine complexity, cross-referring clauses and asking us to put our trust in the intentions of Ministers.

Conservative Back-Bench Members have given credit to the Labour Government's work over five years, but have allowed little for the 10 years of neglect that followed and the failure to implement the standards to which we have referred. Welsh Water came out against privatisation. My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has given the facts about the Government's failure until 1986 to return to even the lowest level of investment made by the Labour Government. Clauses 52 and 20, cited in defence of the Government's measure, mean little without objective and public scrutiny. All the protections in the Bill are flawed without that.

On the evidence of the past 10 years, to trust Ministers would be foolhardy. Lords amendment No. 49 is welcome because it tightens the original wording, which would have imposed little or no obligation on the Secretary of State or the director general to take any serious action to enforce standards. We want to ensure proper monitoring of water quality, and it is sad to see that it is now the EC to which we must turn for any real safeguards and any serious intention to protect the public.

I have a feeling that a reading of Conservative Members' contributions to the debate will not reassure Commissioner Ripa di Meana about the Government's intentions. That is why our amendment to Lords amendment No. 49 is so important. Under our amendment, technical assessors would have an independent role and the EC could monitor properly. Technical reports about contraventions would have to be sent to the EC within two weeks of their coming to knowledge; problems would be brought into the open instead of being buried in bureaucracy or covered up by a Conservative Minister.

The ministerial reply that I received in response to questions to the Secretary of State for Wales on current derogation applications showed an appalling lack of knowledge of or interest in the matter. Our basic point is that if there is to be a process of letting companies off in return for investment schemes, it should be open to scrutiny and subject to objective tests. That is particularly important in view of other amendments that the Secretary of State wants to make today. If he has his way, he will delete the word "wholesome".

The fact that the Secretary of State does not want companies to be obliged to supply people with wholesome water brings home just how much we need European Commission protection. He appears not to care what quality of water comes through the tap, but we and the British public care, and we are trying to build in some protections. Incidentally, if the Secretary of State thinks it impractical to emphasise the word "wholesome", he should note that precisely that word is used in the famous water advertisements to describe quality and to define what people expect, so the water authorities must know what it means. In its version, Welsh Water's claim is

"Water we send your way is regularly tested to ensure it is wholesome."

According to the Secretary of State, that is meaningless. I would prefer to listen to Welsh Water in this context. To delete the word "wholesome" will hardly reassure independent observers who share our justifiable fears about what the Government are up to.

Personally, I am delighted at the success of the water authorities' advertising campaign, although the result has not been quite what the Government or the water authorities intended. Millions of pounds have been spent on the campaign to soften up the British public for the great water sell-off, but the result is that the public are confirmed in their belief that water is of value, and water quality so important that the industry should not be sold off. Their reasons are many, but the simple question of what comes out of the tap takes pride of place—followed by environmental concerns and worry over prices, river quality, land use and so forth.

Among the advertisements published by Welsh Water, my personal favourite is the one that shows a rustic well miles from anyone's home and tells us that we have come a long way since Victorian times. Too right we have, especially in terms of water quality. In Victorian times the industry was in private hands, and water quality was so bad that disease was rife in our towns and cities. Today 79 per cent. of the population firmly oppose the Secretary of State and the water sell-off. My bet is that nearly 100 per cent. of the population firmly oppose the Government's bid to return to Victorian values, that nearly 100 per cent. of the population agree with our plea for safeguards and objective, open monitoring and that nearly 100 per cent. of the population support what we are trying to do in the amendments.

The City also rejects the Government's plans. Water quality is one of the factors that is putting off financiers. The City believes that privatisation should be put off until after water has been brought up to the EC standard, yet the Government are trying to put off the day of reckoning. They do not want to write in the 1993 deadline—itself a compromise—by which date Britain should reach European drinking water standards. The Secretary of State admits that those standards should have been met by 1985. That is why the City, like the public, are suspicious of the Secretary of State's motives in rejecting the Lords amendment.

9.45 pm

How can Ministers press on and ignore water quality problems and the helpful amendments that have been tabled at a time when the Director of Public Prosecutions is in the latter stages of considering criminal charges following the Camelford incident, when even public bodies have been shown to have misled the public and covered up

the facts—something that is bound to be an even greater danger when water is in private hands, since company regulations require shareholders' interests and profits to take priority—and when water authorities are currently and variously being challenged over EC levels of aluminium, lead, iron and manganese? Furthermore, local authority power will be diminished by the Bill. The British Government are defying the European Community over the timetable for improving water standards and may be taken to court by it. Microbiologists and others with direct experience of the water industry are warning the British people and the Secretary of State of the need for the independent monitoring of drinking water quality. The Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment are seen to be headed by Ministers who offer fine words but who lack the commitment to guarantee a supply of drinking water that is of a high and dependable quality.

The Bill is fatally flawed. Information that is technically in the public domain is now inaccessible to public or professional scrutiny and it will be even less accessible to consumers in the future. The Government have not told us —perhaps the Secretary of State will do so now—whether we are to have a locally based system of technical assessors and whether such a service will be provided with guaranteed resources and allowed to be independent. According to the Bill, water quality is not in the hands of the director general. His role is an economic one. Water quality is in the hands of the Secretary of State. Given his complacency earlier tonight, that will not reassure the public.

The Ministers involved want us to trust them. We do not, nor do the public at large. The Bill has been described by a senior Welsh Tory Back-Bench Member as deservedly unpopular. I hope that he and other Conservative Members who realise that the Government have got it wrong will join us in the Lobby and give some protection to the public on the key issue of water quality.

Mr. Ridley: With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker, may I say that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) is fatally flawed? If he looks at clause 52 he will find that it states specifically that there will be a duty to supply wholesome water. That duty remains under any amendments on the Amendment Paper. I agree that he mentioned the Opposition amendment, but again his approach to it was fatally flawed. The need for an independent assessor is recognised elsewhere in the Bill, but the hon. Gentleman seems not to have noticed it. There will, therefore, be an independent assessor. If the Commission wants any information from the Government, it will write and ask for it. There is no need, therefore, for the amendment. The hon. Gentleman's understanding of what is provided for in the Bill is clearly inadequate.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) questioned whether the Government's amendments to clause 20 had convinced and satisfied the Commission. She is quite wrong about that.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Ridley: No. I have very little time and I must get on.

I can do no better than quote the Select Committee on the cuts that the Labour Government made in water investment.

> "There are a number of reasons why water authority effluence falls short of the present consent standards. The most immediate reason is because from the mid-1970s until the early 1980s there was a steady drop in investment by the water authority in sewerage and sewage disposal."

The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) and others signed the Select Committee report.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury was quite wrong when she said that the Labour Government's worst year of investment was better than the Tory average. Labour's worst year of investment was worse than the worst year of Tory investment, so the hon. Lady was absolutely wrong. The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) fails to understand that the underinvestment by the Labour Government is the problem that we all have to face.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) suggested that the Bill had the year 1995 as the date for total compliance by the industry with the water directive. The Bill includes no date by which total compliance is to be achieved. My hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) asked me to confirm that I have the duty to enforce compliance, even for temporary waivers under clause 50. That is indeed the case. I have that duty and I shall certainly exercise it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) was absolutely right when he said that it would probably be illegal to put the date 1993 into the Bill because we had to comply by 1985. The House could find itself brought before the European Court of Justice, of which the Opposition are so inordinately fond, because they had succeeded in getting the amendment into the Bill. They are advocating that the House should legislate in total contradiction with European law.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Ridley: No, I shall not give way.

The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) said that it was as if we had suddenly discovered a new directive. He is right. It is a new directive. The directive that the Labour party and the Government negotiated and that was brought to a conclusion in 1980 was based on annual average compliance. That is what every nation in Europe thought. That is what the Labour party and the Conservative party thought it said. In 1987 the Commission gave it as its opinion, ex cathedra, that it was based on 100 per cent. compliance. That is what changed that game. In 1987 we were just about complying until the goal posts were moved. That is why it was a totally new game. The hon. Member for Bridgend does not seem to realise that.

Finally, we come to the question whether it is correct that the standards should be applied to all the parameters in the directive. I make no secret of the fact that I hope that there will be some relaxation because some of the standards in the directive are ridiculous, extravagant and unnecessary. I believe that it is absurd to put expensive requirements on us in relation to the colour and taste of water. There is no health risk. Peaty water in the north of England is not something to be ashamed of. It is absolutely absurd to insist on those standards. The standard for nitrate is higher than it need be for purely health reasons. I hope that we can persuade the Commission to relax the standards. Of course we cannot do that unilaterally. We shall abide by the standards, but it would be strange if the

[Mr. Ridley]

Opposition did not realise that there has to be some considered judgment as to whether they are the right standards.

The hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) has left the Chamber, so I need not reply to her, but clauses 57 to 59 meet her point about private water supplies, and of course the directive will apply to them.

The Labour party fails to understand that there are about 60 parameters in the directive. All drinking water in this country is wholesome and fit to drink, but of the parameters cited in the directive as being dangerous to health, we shall be in compliance with that for lead within the next few months. It will probably take about two years to comply with microbiological factors, and about two or three years to comply with the directive on nitrates. However, it might take a little longer in a few areas where denitrification plants will be necessary. We should have all the aluminium cleaned up at treatment works in two or three years, but natural aluminium is not mentioned in the directive. All the measures that matter will be completed well before 1993. Colour, iron and manganese traces in the water may take much longer because the entire pipe network will have to be replaced. If the hon. Member for Dewsbury thinks that we can do that by 1993, she should think again.

I agree with my hon. Friends about the scandalous way in which the Labour party has sought to knock the health standards of this country for short-term, cheap political advantage, and I invite the House to reject amendment (a).

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 45 to 48 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 49, in page 21, leave out lines 45 to 47.

Amendment proposed to the Lords amendment, amendment (a), at end add

'and insert "except that the Secretary of State or Director as the case may be shall have regard in any case to which paragraph (b) of this subsection applies to any report submitted to the Director by a technical assessor appointed under section 60 below in respect of the contraventions concerned, and the Director shall within two weeks of receiving any such report submit a copy of it to the European Commission".'.—*[Mrs. Ann Taylor.]*

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 197, Noes 308.

Division No. 274] **[9.56 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudd, David
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to order this day, to put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Lords amendment No. 49 agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 62 and 63 disagreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 64, in page 40, line 16, at end insert—

"(2A) Without prejudice to the generality of the duty conferred by subsection (2) above, regulations under that subsection shall include in any standard of performance a requirement for an undertaker to achieve the levels of drinking water quality specified in EEC Directive 80/778 by a date not later than the date specified by the Secretary of State under subsection (2B) below in respect of each undertaker.

(2B) The date or dates to be specified by the Secretary of State by order under this subsection shall be that or those which either—

(a) Not later than 31st December 1989, have been agreed by the Secretary of State and the European Commission; or

(b) Where no such agreement has been reached by the date referred to in paragraph (a) above, 1st September 1993.

(2C) Where, before the date specified in an order under subsection (2B) above, any further terms of a Directive by the European Commission relating to drinking water quality are introduced, the Secretary of State shall, in consultation with the Commission, by regulations establish the shortest timetable for compliance by each water and sewerage undertaker as he considers to be reasonably practicable."—*[Mr. Alan Howarth]*

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 307, Noes 199.

Division No. 275] **[10.13 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert

Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudd, David
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Lords amendment accordingly disagreed to.
Lords amendments Nos. 50 to 54 agreed to.
Lords amendments Nos. 56 to 61 agreed to.
Lords amendments Nos. 65 to 116 agreed to.

Further consideration of Lords amendments adjourned.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

To be further considered tomorrow.

Hospitals (Walsall)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The background to this Adjournment debate is the decision of the Walsall health authority on 27 April this year to submit an expression of interest—that is how recommendations are worded—in what is called self-governing status for two hospitals in my borough: the main hospital, the Manor, and St. Margaret's hospital. Reference was made in the recommendations to a consultation exercise—whatever that means—by the regional health authority, but, at most, that will be of the most limited kind. Who is to be consulted and on what basis? Are medical and non-medical staff of the hospitals concerned to be consulted, or are they to be balloted? How will residents in the borough, the unions and professional associations be consulted?

On 3 May I wrote to the chairman of the Walsall health authority and told him that I remain strongly opposed to the decision. I stated that there was no evidence whatever that any such decision would be in the overall interests of the borough. I added—I hope that the Minister notes this—that there could be no doubt that the large majority of residents are opposed to those hospitals becoming self-governing. I pointed out that if, however, the health authority was determined to press ahead with this matter, it was essential that the residents in the borough were given an opportunity to express their views. I outlined the arrangements that should therefore be made for balloting to take place, with each electoral polling district within each ward being used for residents to express whether they agree with the recommendations of the health authority.

I followed that up with a letter on 18 May to the Secretary of State, enclosing a copy of my letter to the chairman of the health authority and again setting out the arguments for ensuring that ballots are held before there is any opting out, or what the Government describe as self-governing status, for those National Health Service hospitals. I shall return to that in a moment and also to the reply which I received.

The opted-out hospitals will undoubtedly be under immense pressure to specialise in profitable activities and to drop others. It is far less likely that local communities such as mine will be guaranteed a comprehensve package of services. There will also be a financial disincentive for such opted-out hospitals to treat patients who are not covered by a contract from a health authority or a general practitioner under the White Paper proposals described as "Working for Patients"—that is not how I would describe them.

It may be said that that is the typical reaction of the Labour party. People may say, "What do you expect from Labour politicians? 'Hands off the NHS; hands off the existing arrangements'. It is all party propaganda." I make no apologies for the fact that since the Labour Government brought in the National Health Service 41 years ago we have all been completely devoted to the idea. We were devoted to the conception before it was brought in and we have been determined that the National Health Service should survive.

That is not just the opinion of the Labour party, because medical opinion seems to be of the same view. The British Medical Association Council said:

> "The Council believes that the establishment of self-governing hospitals would fragment the service and destroy its comprehensive nature. Patients would no longer have available to them in their own localities a full range of health care facilities, and this would be a cause of great inconvenience to them and to their relatives."

The BMA, again in evidence to the Select Committee on Social Services, gave this warning:

> "The considerable experience of such hospitals in the USA shows clearly that there will be pressure to encourage admission of patients that can be treated with financial benefit to the hospital, rather than to admit those patients often the chronic sick whose treatment is likely to lead to little or no financial benefit."

I shall quote, too, the views of the joint consultants committee. I very much doubt whether the BMA is dominated by Labour voting doctors. Likewise I have considerable doubt whether the joint consultants committee has an in-built Labour majority. I hope that the Minister will listen to what the committee said:

> "These proposals inevitably change the prime aim of the management of these hospitals, from the provision of adequate care to the community as a whole to the financial success of the hospital. The considerable experience of such hospitals in the USA shows clearly that there will be pressure to encourage admission of patients with conditions that can be treated with financial benefit to the hospital rather than to admit those patients—often the chronic sick—whose treatment is likely to lead to little or no such financial benefit."

There does not seem to be much doubt about the medical view of hospitals opting out. The Royal College of Nursing also expressed strong disapproval of any such plans. Locally, Dr. Bradwell Davies, the chairman of the local medical committee in my borough, whose committee represents 180 general practitioners, said that the vast majority of doctors oppose opting out by hospitals. He also made the valid point that they have not been consulted.

Opted-out hospitals will have the right to dispose of assets. The only restriction apparently will be if the Secretary of State believes that it would be against the public interest. The Opposition do not believe that that is much of a guarantee at all.

As there is the possibility that the Minister will consider that opting out is not the right expression to use about this matter, it is interesting to note that on 15 May, when I asked the Minister of State, Department of Health about opting-out hospitals, he did not challenge that description. That is rather like the so-called community charge. Everyone knows that it is a poll tax—even Ministers admit that. The same can be said about hospitals opting out.

I take the view that opting out is a halfway house to privatisation. No doubt the Minister will tell me that opted-out hospitals or hospitals with governing status, however he likes to describe them, will remain with the National Health Service. Perhaps they will, in a way, but opting out is a halfway house to privatisation. We all know how the Government could proceed once hospitals opted out of the existing NHS management structure.

The Minister and I will not agree about the pros and cons of opting out. He is here, understandably, to represent the Government's point of view. The decision was made in Cabinet, and a junior Minister—I mean no disrespect to the hon. Gentleman—is here to echo the Government's line. He is not likely to say, "You have a point of view and I shall press it among my ministerial colleagues." We shall clearly not reach agreement on this matter tonight.

Before there is any opting out or self-governing status, whatever description the Minister wants to apply to the proposals, there should be adequate balloting before the matter is taken any further. It is interesting to note that balloting is necessary before schools can opt out. Before the accommodation of council tenants can be bought by private landlords, balloting is necessary. Before a housing action trust can be set up, balloting is now necessary. As we know, the Government were adamant initially that there would not be any balloting for housing action trusts. The Secretary of State remained adamant, even when the other place passed an amendment that required balloting to take place. At the end of the day, however, balloting was accepted.

I received today the Minister's reply to my letter of 18 May. It is dated 30 June. He states:

"RHAs will give the proposals publicity and seek the views of all interested parties particularly the health authority concerned, staff of the hospital, general practitioners, community health councils and the local community."

He adds:

"We have decided that it would not be sensible for the RHA to organise ballots of staff or any other group with an interest."

What does that mean? What sort of a consultation exercise will it be? Do not the Government believe in the same form of democracy in which I believe? I believe in balloting. Let the people decide. I am a democrat. If a decision goes against me, that is most unfortunate to say the least, but for all the reasons that I have outlined I must accept the decision, as I have accepted other decisions. I have no doubt that the Minister has done that in political life when decisions have gone against him. That is the nature of our democracy.

Why should there be no balloting in this instance? Is it really not practicable, or is it because the Government know that if balloting occurred there would be an overwhelming majority against the Government's proposals? The Minister knows that that is so, but he will not concede the point. He knows it as well as I do, otherwise the Government would have no hesitation about balloting.

At a public meeting that was held in the town hall in the borough a few weeks ago there was total opposition to any opting out. No one came from the Conservative party or the doctors to say, "I have a point of view that is in its favour." We would have listened because we are democrats. The meeting was well advertised, publicised and attended and no view was expressed in favour of the Government's case. If the Minister consulted the local district health authority, I think that it would concede to him privately that what I am saying is the truth. Who is frightened of democracy? Who is reluctant to put the issues to those who are concerned?

We will not abandon the campaign. In my borough we will continue to insist that those two hospitals remain within the existing NHS management structure. I hope that there will be similar campaigns throughout the country in defence of the NHS hospitals. I said that I thought of the plans as a halfway house to privatisation. The Government have no real commitment to the NHS. We all know that if, electorally, they could have got away with it, even more damage would have been done—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) mutters and mumbles, but I doubt whether he has any commitment to the NHS.

The Minister, understandably, will read his prepared speech, but I hope that he will take on board what I have said about democracy and the views of the local community. The overwhelming majority are against his proposals. We shall certainly continue the campaign in Walsall.

10.41 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on securing this debate and on presenting his arguments so clearly. It is a pleasure, at this hour of night, to be debating with such a seasoned campaigner, battling as always against common sense and, on this occasion, the tide of history on the reforms of the National Health Service.

During the six months that I have served as a health Minister I have visited many hospitals and spoken to many of those who work in the Health Service. I have seen for myself the great deal of interest in the concept of self-governing hospitals. The Government are convinced that it is an exciting and excellent opportunity for the NHS. I shall be playing my part—not merely reading speeches as the hon. Gentleman implied—in helping to explain to those who work in the NHS and to patients the great value of the Government's proposals.

I am glad to have this opportunity to put on record the considerable achievements of the Walsall district health authority in improving health services for the people of Walsall and the ways in which our White Paper proposals will build on those achievements. The hon. Gentleman did not have time to dwell upon the authority's achievements, nor upon those of the Government during the past 10 years. I hope that he will not mind if I take a few minutes to put those achievements on the record before dealing specifically with his points.

The Government's record since we came to office amply demonstrates our commitment to the National Health Service. We have increased spending by some 40 per cent. in real terms. We are treating more patients each year and we have greatly increased the numbers of doctors and nurses working in the NHS.

Walsall district health authority has shared in all those advances and has significantly improved its position as a district that includes some of the most deprived areas in the west midlands region. In the current financial year the district has received an increase of more than £5·5 million in its revenue budget, bringing the total to just under £53 million. That represents a cash increase this year alone of 11·5 per cent. Part of that increase will help to pay for the running costs of the new £20 million Walsall district general hospital which, as the hon. Member will know, was recently completed. That magnificent new hospital, which will admit its first patients in December, will eventually have 289 acute beds, together with an accident and emergency department, operating theatres, a coronary care unit and X-ray rooms.

That is not the only major development in Walsall. Work is due to start as soon as possible on the new Anchor Meadow community hospital, costing more than £9 million. It should be completed by March 1991. We have recently given approval in principle to a new scheme for psychiatric services in the district. That scheme, costing some £8 million, will be carried out in two phases, the first starting later this year. That is a major capital investment

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

programme in anyone's terms. The people of Walsall already have a Health Service of which they can be justifiably proud. The completion of those projects will provide further improvements.

Walsall is to be congratulated on its success in reducing hospital in-patient waiting lists, which were down in March 1989 by nearly 17 per cent. by comparison with the previous year. The reduction in the number of people who have waited for longer than a year is even more dramatic, for it has fallen by more than one third. Those significant achievements are reflected by increased activity rates in almost all specialties. That is a tribute to the skills and professionalism not only of management but of all who work in the Health Service in Walsall.

There is more to proper health care than hospitals—and Walsall's efforts, quite properly, do not end with the provision of hospital services. The district has an admirable record of taking positive and imaginative steps to prevent ill health. In January, I announced that for 1989-90 the Government were allocating to regions a total of £7·8 million for measles, mumps and rubella vaccinations. I drew attention to the excellent local rubella publicity campaign being run in Walsall, which continues to be a great success. There have been about 860,000 vaccinations to date, and the district is well on its way to meeting its target. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that the health authority is doing a great deal to improve the health care—including hospital facilities—that is available to the people of Walsall.

I turn to the hon. Gentleman's specific points. The White Paper "Working for Patients" outlines a number of initiatives to make the Health Service more responsive to the needs of patients by delegating responsibility for managing hospitals as far as possible to local level, and giving general practitioners and patients more choice. Our basic thinking is that hospitals and other NHS units are best run locally by the doctors, nurses and managers who have first-hand local knowledge. Self-governing hospitals will have the freedom to run their own affairs.

Self-governing hospitals will not opt out but will remain fully part of the National Health Service. The hon. Gentleman believes that that is halfway to privatisation and to breaking up the NHS. He is entitled to his belief, but he is wrong. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Government made it absolutely plain that the Health Service will continue to deliver its services free to patients and be financed largely by taxation and by national insurance contributions.

Each self-governing hospital or unit will have its own trust, which will assume responsibility from the district health authority. In that way they will be able to benefit from the freedoms outlined in the White Paper, to respond to patient needs, to improve the quality of care even more effectively, and to develop a greater sense of local commitment and pride. We stress that self-governing hospitals must continue to meet the needs of patients and the community. They will have delegated freedoms in respect of staff numbers, pay, and capital programmes. Staff transferring to a self-governing hospital will carry over their terms and conditions of service, including pension rights.

The Government fully recognise the importance of maintaining local access to a comprehensive range of health care services. We look to district health authorities to take responsibility for that and for ensuring that contracts are arranged in such a way as to ensure that integration of community and in-patient services is maintained. With the development of self-governing hospitals, and of greater devolution to hospitals that remain under district health authority control, districts will be better able to give attention to those key tasks.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, one of the White Paper's key proposals is that DHAs will have responsibility for the care of all those in their districts and will be purchasers of health care, whereas the hospitals —both self-governing and directly managed—will be the suppliers of health care. The district health authority will be responsible for ensuring that an adequate range of services, including core services, is available in its district.

Mr. Winnick: Obviously the Government have made up their mind to push the White Paper's proposals as much as possible—and it is equally obvious that the consultation exercises and all the rest of it are purely cosmetic. The Minister naturally praises the Government's intentions, but why are the Government so isolated? Leaving aside the objections of the Labour party and the rest, why is medical opinion almost unanimously opposed to the proposals? I read out the views of the BMA, of the JCC, and of the general practitioners in my borough—and I imagine that their view is shared by GPs in the Minister's constituency. If the proposals are so marvellous and will enhance the NHS, why are the general public—let alone the medical profession—far from being persuaded?

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman may cite the BMA's views, but that does not mean that his arguments are right.

I turn to the subjects of consultation and ballots and to the other matters that the hon. Gentleman specifically raised.

The chief executive of the National Health Service management board invited initial expressions of interest in the proposals for self-government to be sent to regional health authorities by 31 May. Of the 179 expressions of interest 19 came from West Midlands region, including one from the Manor hospital and one from St. Margaret's hospital in Walsall. Expressions of interest are just that: they do not carry any commitment to proceed with an application. Indeed, it would be unrealistic to expect them to do so until they have fuller information. We are very encouraged by the level of interest that people from all parts of the NHS are showing in our proposals.

We have recently published further guidance on the establishment and operation of self-governing hospitals. A national conference on self-governing hospitals, attended by more than 400 people from the NHS, was held in London on 20 June, and we are following it up with a series of eight regional conferences around the country. The first was held in Birmingham on 22 June. I hope that those who attended, including those from the units in Walsall that had expressed an interest, found it interesting and informative. Sponsors of expressions of interest will want to consider the new information in detail, and to discuss the implications with their staff and district and regional health authorities before deciding whether to proceed with an application.

When people decide to proceed with firm applications they will be asked to complete an application document. Regional health authorities will give firm applications

local publicity and seek the view of those with an interest, particularly the health authorities concerned, staff at the hospital, general practitioners, community health councils and the local community. Each application will need to be subject to careful consultation, given the complicated service, management and financial implications involved. The Secretary of State will consider any responses, together with any comments on them from the regional health authority, alongside the application. The timing will depend on the passage of the necessary legislation.

The hon. Gentleman asked why there should not be a ballot. We are not changing the terms and conditions of staff employed in the Health Service. This is not a closure, nor is a hospital leaving the Health Service; it is a delegation of powers and responsibilities by the Secretary of State to a hospital trust. We do not consider, therefore, that a ballot is either necessary or practical. To what constituency would the ballot apply? As the hon. Gentleman knows, patients—including Manor hospital patients—come from outside his district, and it is not possible or feasible to define the constituency precisely, as can be done with a school or housing estate.

The final decision on applications will rest with the Secretary of State. As explained in the White Paper, he will expect applications for self-government to demonstrate first adequate managerial skills and capacity to run the hospital as a self-governing unit, and second the involvement of senior professional staff in management of the hospital. He will also need to be satisfied that the proposal is consistent with maximum choice for patients and GPs, that the proposed unit would be financially viable, and that self-governing status is not being sought as an alternative to closure.

The process is not a race, and hospitals will become self-governing only when they are ready. It is too early to comment on the prospects for particular hospitals at this stage. An application for self-governing status will take time and commitment to prepare, but it provides the opportunity for hospitals to address the implications of self-government and to build up their capacity to run their own affairs effectively so that their hospital is ready, when self-governing status has been achieved, to apply their new freedoms to the benefit of patients and the local community.

Mr. Winnick: The Minister argues that ballots are not necessary because the hospitals are to remain in the NHS. Why, then, the consultation? Clearly the Government accept that consultation is necessary, although we believe that it would be a cosmetic exercise. What sort of consultation will take place with the local community? If the Minister's argument holds water—that the local community should not really be involved, because the hospital caters for a wider element—why do both the letter and the Minister's speech refer to the local communities being consulted?

Mr. Freeman: I think that, on reflection, the hon. Gentleman will agree that there is a distinction between a change in organisation structure in the Health Service—where consultation is necessary and the Secretary of State intends that it should take place—and a fundamental change in NHS structure, involving, for instance, privatisation or breaking up the NHS. That is not intended, but in such circumstances it would clearly be appropriate to consult the electorate democratically. In this reorganisation of the Health Service, management authority is being devolved by the Secretary of State from regions and district to self-governing trusts. They remain within the Health Service. The Secretary of State envisages that those who are most directly involved, including the staff who work in the hospitals and certainly the community health council, will be invited to offer their views. As the hon. Gentleman knows, those views are expressed by community health councils when there is the prospect of a closure. The community health council will be asked to give its views about the devolvement of management responsibility and the Secretary of State will certainly take into account those views.

We expect some applicants to wish to take advantage of the new proposals as early as possible. They will aim to achieve self government by April 1991, the earliest sensible date, subject to the passage of the necessary legislation through this House and another place. Others will be ready later.

I hope that these comments will help Walsall and other authorities in England carefully and thoroughly to review the prospects for the exciting challenge of self government.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 4 July 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Loans

1. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he now has any proposals to amend the payment deferment arrangements for student top-up loans to include suitable categories of disablement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): Under the arrangements we propose, deferment of repayment will depend on graduates' incomes. Disabled graduates will benefit from those arrangements in the same way as other graduates.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend confirm that disabled students will have full access to social security benefit? Will he re-examine the scheme to see whether he can provide disabled students with larger top-up loans and longer terms for repayment?

Mr. Jackson: I certainly confirm that, as the White Paper makes clear, disabled students will continue to be able to claim social security benefits and disability allowance, where appropriate. When we set the level of grants that will operate from September 1990, the question will have to be resolved of what to do about the existing allowances in the grant for disabled students. The Government will certainly consider the position sympathetically.

Mr. Ashley: Does the Minister recognise that additional costs for disabled students are very high and that the jobs that they will take up will not pay enough to allow them to repay loans? Therefore, instead of minor adjustments to student top-up loans, is not a complete reappraisal of the grants for disabled students required?

Mr. Jackson: Support for disabled people in general is a matter for the Secretary of State for Social Security. I know that he has considered the matter sympathetically and that there have been considerable improvements in recent years. I do not believe, however, that there is a case for substantial additions beyond the deferment of the obligation to repay that we propose for disabled people who have had the benefit of higher education. One has to think in terms of a category of disablement which is taken care of, dealing in general with people who are disabled and then the concessions that will be available to disabled students in terms of access to social security and additional allowances.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: I was slightly reassured by what my hon. Friend said about reconsidering grants to disabled students. In view of the representations that I and many hon. Members have received from deaf and blind students, we appreciate the excessive obstacles that they must overcome to take advantage of higher education in the same way as sighted and hearing students. Is there not a case for considering an entire reappraisal of the grant allocation to such students rather than the top-up loan scheme?

Mr. Jackson: There are already allowances for disabled students in the grant. We shall consider their future in the context of the overall review of the grant that will have to be made before the new regulations come into operation in September 1990. We shall certainly be looking at that sympathetically.

2. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received since his recent statement on student top-up loans.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): Since my statement on 19 June, I have received 63 representations.

Mr. Pike: Does the Secretary of State recognise that this policy is absolute folly and that it will reduce educational opportunities? Does he recognise, too, that it will go counter to the intention of the Secretary of State for Health to increase degree opportunities for nurses and that it will force more nurses out of higher education and back into traditional training, which will be worse for both the National Health Service and for nurses?

Mr. Baker: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. As I have said on many occasions, we are the only developed country that does not have a system of top-up loans alongside grants. In all those other countries a higher proportion of the relevant age band goes into higher education. It has not acted as a disincentive in other countries, and I do not believe that it will here.

Mr. Pawsey: When my right hon. Friend responds to those representations, will he make a particular point of stressing that the top-up loan scheme will enable substantial additional numbers of students to go into higher education? Will he further make the point that there must be a limit to the amount of taxpayers' support available to students and that, therefore, we are finding a new form of funding? Will my right hon. Friend refer to the three access funds and, if it is at all possible, will he consider increasing them to more than the proposed £5 million each, totalling £15 million?

Mr. Baker: On the latter point, I note what my hon. Friend has said and I am sure that he appreciates that that will be a matter for discussion later in the year in the public expenditure survey round. I also note what my hon. Friend said about the level of access funds. On the other point that my hon. Friend made, I remind the House that the disentitlement to benefit next year for students will amount to about £65 million, but the extra resources available

through top-up loans will amount to £167 million. That is a substantial increase and it means more money for more students.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Why was the Secretary of State economical with the truth when he answered questions on his statement of 17 June about the cost of top-up loans? Why did he talk about the start-up and administrative costs only and not include inflation, the cost to the Department of Education and Science and the ongoing running costs? Surely the reality is that with every additional student there will be additional costs far in excess of what he estimated. If the right hon. Gentleman does not come clean he will be shuffling off the coils of his office with the words of Sir Walter Scott ringing in his ears:

"O what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive!"

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman's contribution makes one thankful that the leadership of his party is in the hands that it is—and that is saying a great deal.

The hon. Gentleman's facts are wrong. I made my statement on 19 June, not on 17 June; that was the first fact that he got wrong. The costs of the scheme are set out clearly in the White Paper, under the heading "Costs and Savings". Inflation is allowed for and the costs that I gave to the House are contained in the Price Waterhouse report on the recurrent and running costs. If the hon. Gentleman wants to engage in a serious debate on the matter he must first educate himself in the facts.

Mr. Marlow: I think I am right—my right hon. Friend will correct me if I am wrong—that higher education does not come free. Somebody must pay for it. As it is inappropriate that parents should be responsible for their adult children and also totally inappropriate that the vast majority of taxpayers, who do not enjoy and are unlikely to enjoy the benefits and privileges of higher education, should pay more than a certain amount for higher education, is it not right that those who are to receive the benefits and privileges of higher education should find some of the money for their own benefit and education?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend puts his finger on an important point. The White Paper said that in 1984 student support for living costs per year was about £700 a student in Britain, £70 in Germany and £30 in Japan. We have a generous system of support for students. We believe that it is reasonable for the costs of the living expenses of students to be borne by three parties: the state—the grants will continue—their parents, whom we assess for contributions, and the students themselves through what will be a generous top-up loan scheme.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister recognise that there is concern in education circles about the scheme, which was notably expressed yesterday by the chancellor of the university of Ulster? Last week two leading academics said that they would welcome the interest-free loan for themselves because it was tax free, but were worried that poorer families would not wish to put themselves into debt.

Mr. Baker: Protections are built into the scheme, one of which is that the obligation to repay the top-up loan will not start for nine months until after a student has left university. There will be no obligation to repay until the salary of the graduate is at least 85 per cent. of the average national wage. At the moment there is almost no graduate unemployment and those graduates who are unemployed are so by choice. Most graduates have salaries a third to a half higher than the national average wage.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many taxpayers who have not had the benefit of further education and, as a consequence, are unlikely to have the same salary expectations as graduates, would see the top-up loan as a useful personal investment for students? They would resent paying the entire bill, as at present, for further education.

Mr. Baker: That is a very fair point. The Opposition want more generous and higher grants, but they must come out of taxable income, which is paid by many people who, as my hon. Friend said, have never been or are never likely to go to university or polytechnic. It is also unlikely that their families will do so. It is reasonable to say that people who attend higher education institutions should make a substantial investment in their own future. *The Economist* estimates that that investment has a pay off of about 24 per cent. It is entirely reasonable that students should be expected to make some contribution on terms that are the most generous of any top-up loan scheme that I have seen in the western world. I believe that our scheme will be very popular.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State is deliberately confusing his Back-Bench Members—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps they are confused already. The right hon. Gentleman knows that the taxpayer will pay more for the new scheme than he currently pays for the student grant scheme, but the student will get less. It is another example of the shambles of the scheme.

If the right hon. Gentleman is so confident about the costings of the scheme, why does he not publish the Price Waterhouse report? Why does he not publish the detailed costings done by his Department, including debt collecting, set-up, depreciation, central Government and college costs? He knows that the costings in the White Paper are both selective and defective. Why does he not publish the costs of the indemnity which, according to last Saturday's *Financial Times*, is being demanded by the banks not only against a change of Government, but against a change of Government policy? What is the premium on that indemnity, or is the risk so great that no one will take it?

Mr. Baker: The risk of this Government changing and giving way to a Government who would be damaging to the country is not very substantial and would be an insurable risk.

The Price Waterhouse report was commissioned by the Committee of London and Scottish Bankers. I shall be having a word with the committee's chairman later. My preference is to publish the report and I hope to place copies of it in the Library later this week.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statistics in the White Paper which set out the costings of the scheme. He must realise that the scheme will be welcomed by many hundreds of thousands of students, such as the 120,000 students who currently do not receive any grant because they are means-tested out of it; the 160,000 students whose grants are reduced by the means test; and the 50,000 students who do not receive mandatory awards. All those people will benefit substantially from the top-up loan scheme.

Licensed Teachers

3. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what will be the minimum and maximum qualifications required to enable individuals to qualify for licensed teacher status; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John Butcher): Candidates for licensed teacher status must have successfully completed at least two years full-time higher education or the part-time equivalent; have attained a standard in English and mathematics equivalent to GCSE grade C; and have reached the age of 26 before they take up their post as a licensed teacher.

Mr. Greenway: How many teachers does my hon. Friend expect to recruit into the classrooms through the device of licensed teachers? Will he expand upon his answer and give the House and the country an assurance that those taken into the scheme will be thoroughly and satisfactorily qualified to teach at the level to which they are assigned?

Mr. Butcher: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. The beauty of the licensed teachers scheme is that there will be two years of training which will be assessed and, if satisfactorily completed, will permit that teacher to go into the classroom on a qualified and professional basis. That contrasts with the current position of no requirement for formal training. Indeed, a number of teachers who do not have formal training are already in the classrooms, although that is not to suggest that they are not very good teachers. Our objective is to broaden the catchment without eroding professional standards in the classroom.

Mr. Madel: What will be the compulsory age for retirement for licensed teachers, and will it be the same for men as for women?

Mr. Butcher: The retirement conditions that pertain for those who qualify through the traditional route will also pertain for those who come through the licensed teachers scheme. Our whole objective is that once licensed teachers are in the classroom, they should have equal opportunities, terms and conditions across the board.

Schools (Ancillary Workers)

4. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received any representations concerning the pay of school secretaries and ancillary workers in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend receives occasional letters on this subject.

Mr. Vaz: Does the Minister agree that the current salary scale for school secretaries is lamentably low? Does he further agree that the role of school secretaries has changed enormously during the past few years, both in their administrative and in their financial responsibilities? A constituent of mine, Mrs. Jenny Mould, who lives in Thurnby Lodge, is a school secretary and has to perform no fewer than 55 separate functions every day. Will the Minister consider setting up a national review of the pay and conditions of school secretaries in the light of the great changes that have recently occurred?

Mr. Butcher: I join the hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to the work of school secretaries. Head teachers and staff rely on them and the vast majority discharge their duties very well indeed. We have no plans to change the way in which their pay is negotiated. As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is done with the local authority associations and most local education authorities tend to go along with the pay and conditions so negotiated. As with many of those who supply education to our young people, their job is changing and that is why about £6 million of the £100 million training and equipment programme, which is part of local management for schools, will be for non-teaching staff, I hope that the secretaries will benefit from that.

Mr. Paice: As we move towards grant-maintained schools and more devolved management responsibility in schools, will not each school be able to make the necessary changes to its pay structure for ancillary staff to meet local circumstances and to match salaries to the job that is done?

Mr. Butcher: My hon. Friend is right. We wish to push responsibility upstream to where it is most required—the chief executive, the head and the governing body. They can make decisions on salaries across a range of activities in the best interests and given the particular needs of their school. That is a major improvement and one of the major advantages of local management for schools.

Teachers (Negotiating Rights)

5. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to establish a new negotiating body for teachers' pay.

12. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to restore negotiating rights to the teaching profession; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am inviting the employers and the teacher unions to further meetings this month to discuss new pay determination arrangements.

Mr. Howells: The Secretary of State will be aware that there is an acute shortage of Welsh language teachers. What advice will he be giving the Secretary of State for Wales on pay, status and the low morale within the profession?

Mr. Baker: I visited a Welsh-language school only a fortnight ago and there was no low morale there. I was impressed with the calibre of its teaching. All its teachers spoke Welsh and the language of instruction was Welsh. They did not tell me that there was any shortage of Welsh teachers in that part of Wales.

Mr. Flannery: The Secretary of State will know that the Select Committee on Education, Arts and Science—not because it wants to but because it has to—is preparing a report on the growing shortage of teachers generally, not merely in the Welsh language. Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that the removal of the teaching profession's free negotiating rights contributed to the profession's low morale? Yet only now does he tell us that

he will discuss it with the employers. Does he realise that the free trade unionism in a country such as Britain demands that negotiating rights be restored forthwith, which will in turn bring more teachers into the profession?

Mr. Baker: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman remembers, but I had a drink with him on the Terrace last night along with the new general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, Mr. Doug McAvoy. I told Mr. McAvoy that this month we would meet him and other union leaders to try to find a new machinery. There has not been much agreement, but I shall be putting proposals, as no doubt will he, and I hope that a way forward can be found.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we do not need a national negotiating body but rather regional pay, which will end the unfair treatment of many teachers in the south-east, particularly those who are beyond the reach of London weighting and the like? Should we not have regional pay and the regional funding to go with it?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend makes an important point which I shall discuss with the unions. Many local education authorities have already introduced incentives or inducements of one sort or another to help to recruit teachers, particularly in the south-east and in London. That recognises the regional and local differences in pay levels—which, as I said, is something that I shall discuss with the unions.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Given the enormous variations in demand and supply in the country and the move away from national pay negotiations throughout the economy, is there not a strong argument for saying that national wage negotiations are a failed anachronism which should be replaced by school-based bargaining, founded on local knowledge of the demand for, and availability of, teachers?

Mr. Baker: There is some advantage in having a national allowances structure—an important change which we secured in 1987—whereby there is a main professional grade and five allowances over it. I do not want any future machinery to endanger that arrangement, as it is seen as the way forward for the profession. As I said when replying to the previous question, the need for a new negotiating body is raised again and again, and I am clear that whatever may emerge, any machinery must have considerable flexibility to allow for variations as between local education authorities, and as between different parts of the country.

Mr. Fatchett: When the Secretary of State enters into negotiations on the new pay machinery, will he acknowledge that taking away from teachers the right to bargain had a greater impact on their morale than any other decision made by the Government and led to its collapse? Will the right hon. Gentleman undertake not to drag out those negotiations, and will he confirm that next year's pay settlement will come not from the interim advisory committee but will be settled across the negotiating table, between the employers and the teachers' representatives?

Mr. Baker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I shall discuss all those matters with the unions and the employers in the next two or three weeks. I reject completely any suggestion that the teaching profession is suffering from low morale, on the evidence that each year 25,000 people enter the profession.

Mr. Fatchett: But how many leave it?

Mr. Baker: About the same number. If 25,000 people annually believe that teaching is an interesting and valuable profession, morale within it cannot be low. Since March 1986, teachers have enjoyed a 40 per cent. increase in pay, which is a major adjustment upwards. Many head teachers, for example, received a £2,000 per annum increase this year. That implies that the profession is better rewarded under this Government than it ever was under Labour.

Mr. Holt: When considering whether there should be regional negotiations, perhaps my right hon. Friend will take on board the remarks of the Nalgo official who has just negotiated a deal for his members with Northumbrian Water which he says is amicable, excellent and bodes well for the future?

Mr. Baker: That is very interesting, and I shall draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of the trade union leaders whom I meet during the next few weeks. I am sure that the way forward for teachers' pay is a large number of incentive allowances to reward good teaching in the classroom and those teachers who give of their best—which is the great proportion of them—coupled with the flexibility that not only my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) but other of my hon. Friends want to see.

Teacher Shortages

6. **Ms. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with the Inner London education authority about teacher shortages.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): My right hon. Friend met a delegation from the ILEA, led by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), on 13 June. I held a meeting with leaders of the inner London councils on 19 June. On both occasions, practical solutions to the shortages of teachers in London were discussed.

Ms. Gordon: Does the Minister realise that qualified teachers are leaving the profession in droves; that former colleagues who are devoted teachers repeatedly tell me that they feel that they are used as scapegoats and are under intolerable pressures; that in Tower Hamlets, where my constituency is located, 30 per cent. of the teaching staff —[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading".]—have handed in their resignations; that there are at least 300 children without school places that we know of, and many more that we do not know of; that the birth rate is increasing by 20 per cent.; that there are about 1,000 children who will not have school teachers when the next term comes; and that parents who are lucky enough to know that their children will have teachers are receiving letters from headteachers saying that they cannot guarantee—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Lady make it brief, please?

Ms. Gordon: I shall make it as brief as I can, Mr. Speaker.

Their teachers say that they cannot guarantee to operate the national curriculum, and are telling parents that there are a series of unacceptable measures such as sending children home on a rota basis.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that that is enough. [HON. MEMBERS: "Sit down."] I think that the hon. Lady should do so, in fairness to others.

Mrs. Rumbold: I know that the hon. Lady feels very strongly about these matters. I should tell her that the interim advisory committee, which studied teacher recruitment most recently, came up with exactly the same figures as it produced last year, and the evidence suggests that only 1 per cent. of the total teaching force leaves the profession.

When we discussed the matter with both ILEA and individual leaders of the inner London authorities that are taking over responsibility, we talked about methods of recruitment and retention. I remind the hon. Lady that recruiting teachers is a long-term planning matter, and I therefore rather regret that ILEA did not take it up earlier.

Mr. Tracey: Has my hon. Friend suggested to teachers —and, indeed, parents—that life will be much better under the new education authorities, especially when they are Conservative controlled?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is no doubt that the new education authorities, which are working hard in planning both for teacher recruitment and for the delivery of education to children in their boroughs, will provide much better education, especially in the Conservative-controlled boroughs.

Mr. Straw: Is the Minister aware that last Thursday, when I asked the Secretary of State how many teachers had submitted their resignations by 31 May 1989, the right hon. Gentleman replied in a written answer that the information was not available, and that the latest data on teacher resignations related to the year ending March 1987? How can the Secretary of State and the Minister dare to evade blame for the major and growing teacher crisis in inner London and elsewhere when, on the Secretary of State's admission, the information that he and the Minister have obtained on resignations is more than two years old?

Mrs. Rumbold: The information to which we referred was collected by ILEA. It is wrong to say that responsibility for the planning and recruitment of teacher numbers lies with the Government; the local education authorities are the managers of the education service within their areas, and they know perfectly well that it takes at least a term to plan recruitment. ILEA, along with every other local authority, should have looked at the problem much earlier.

LEAs (Training Grants)

7. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase the financial support available to local education authorities through the local education authority training grants scheme.

Mrs. Rumbold: I announced our plans on 16 May, in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot). We propose to increase the expenditure which attracts the higher rate of grant by £36 million, or 43 per cent., and to reduce the expediture which attracts the lower rate of grant by £35 million, or 27 per cent.

Mr. Morley: Is the Minister aware that the total expenditure of the LEA training grant scheme between this year and next will be increased by only 1·4 per cent? That is a substantial cut in real terms. On top of that, the grant to LEAs for training schemes will be cut from 70 to 65 per cent., at a time when LEAs and teachers are being asked to do more and more training because of the national curriculum, local management systems and various schemes introduced by the Government. How will it help to expect them to do more and more with fewer and fewer resources, and how will that help teachers' morale?

Mrs. Rumbold: The training grant scheme needs to be looked at together with the other main specific grant programme—education support grants. Many of the ESG programmes also support training, and in 1990-91 training grants and education support grants will together support the largest ever specific education grant programme, costing £355 million.

Mr. Dunn: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is about time that we had a review of all aspects of training and training grants? Does she agree that it is strange that we should have four great Departments of state all involved with training, when we should really have one Department for training, which should be called the Department of Education and Training?

Mrs. Rumbold: I note my hon. Friend's views on the way in which departmental responsibilities for training should be organised. Bearing in mind the great sum that is spent on teacher training, it is vital that the money is well directed. It is a simple-minded illusion to suggest that more input means greater vaue. What really matters is the way in which the money is spent. We must ensure that training, including in-service training, is prepared and managed in such a way that it achieves the best possible results for teachers.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Does the Minister recognise that the question is about specific grants to local authorities for the training of teachers in service? Is he aware that at a time when local authorities are being asked to expand training for teachers—in view of the national curriculum, the new local financial management and other initiatives being taken by the Government for training teachers—rather than reducing expenditure in real terms, as is happening, and at the same time reducing the amount of money available to local authorities by way of direct support for other national priority areas, the Government should be massively increasing spending on teacher training, irrespective of Government spending in other areas?

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman sadly misunderstands the situation. There has been a huge increase in the amount of money for in-service training. It is vital for local authorities to study the way in which that money is managed to ensure that the best possible value is given to the teachers who receive the training. If that is not done,

there will be no point in adding further resources in this sphere, for the management of the money governs the way in which the teachers benefit.

Higher Education (Students)

8. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the increase in the number of students enrolled in universities and polytechnics since 1979.

Mr. Jackson: Compared with 1979, provisional figures for 1988 show an increase of around 130,000 higher education students at universities in Great Britain and at English and Welsh polytechnics. The increase is over 200,000 across all higher education in Great Britain.

Mr. Irvine: I thank my hon. Friend for those encouraging figures. Does he agree that they contrast favourably with the situation when Labour was last in power? *[Interruption.]* Will he confirm that despite all the fine words we hear about the devotion of Labour Members to higher education, when they were in power between 1974 and 1979 the number of students in higher education fell?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We are moving towards having 1 million students. Not only are the absolute numbers increasing—which could be explicable because of demographic change—but participation rates have increased. I refer to participation rates of students overall—of mature students, part-time students, women students—of every category of students one cares to name.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: If, as the Minister says, participation rates have increased, may I ask him to give the participation rate in 1979, and the present rate, of those who are qualified to participate? Is he aware that the tragedy behind the figures that he has given is that the number of working-class youngsters going into higher education has not increased and that the real problem is that not enough working-class youngsters stay on after 16 years of age? What are the Government doing to encourage them to stay on? Is the Minister aware that the loan scheme will discourage working-class youngsters from staying on beyond 16?

Mr. Jackson: Although there has been a slight increase in the participation rates from social classes 4 and 5 since 1979, the overall performance is extremely disappointing, in spite of 30 years of the most generous grants system in the world. That is one reason that leads the Government to believe that there is a case for the introduction of student loans.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my hon. Friend discuss with the Secretary of State and the authorities the ever-popular view that every polytechnic must become a university? It is very much better to be a leading polytechnic, such as Rolle college and other colleges of that nature, than to be one of the lesser universities. Encouragement should be given to maximising the benefits of polytechnic education which can relieve the pressure on universities.

Mr. Jackson: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Government and Parliament took the view in the Education Reform Act 1988 that there is a distinctive mission for the polytechnics, of which they are entitled to be very proud.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Can the Minister confirm that almost all the expansion to which he refers occurred in local authority polytechnics and colleges before the public expenditure cuts began to bite and before he became a Minister? If his Government's record is so good, why were there 5,000 fewer first degree students in universities in 1987 than there were in 1981, and why has the proportion of admissions from private schools over the last five years gone up while the proportion of admissions from comprehensives has gone down? Does he accept that the Government's shambles of a loans scheme makes these inequalities very much worse?

Mr. Jackson: I am very happy to join the hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to the polytechnics for the excellent work that they have done in expanding the number of their students. The Government do not determine how many students enter the universities. I have often referred to the fact that the unit cost of students at universities has increased since 1979.

National Curriculum

9. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what weight he gives to the educational needs of children of those serving in the armed forces in making detailed arrangements for the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend affords equal treatment to the educational needs of children who attend maintained schools, whatever the occupation of their parents.

Mr. Key: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend. Is she aware that about 30,000 children attend schools that are run by the Service Children education authority? Will she do her very best to ensure that they do not suffer from having access to fewer facilities and opportunities than are available to children in this country? Will she look in particular at the very difficult question of work experience and at the potential for learning foreign languages that is made available to those many children who live abroad, particularly in West Germany?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing that out. He will be interested to know that I had a discussion last week with some people from schools in Germany. I was able to reassure them that the national curriculum will go a long way towards ensuring continuity of education for those children. We also discussed the teaching of foreign languages, especially German to children who are living in Germany, and work experience. All those matters are being examined.

Mr. Dalyell: What does the hon. Lady mean by "continuity" in that context?

Mrs. Rumbold: Continuity means studying according to the national curriculum, whether in a maintained school in this country or in a school that is maintained in Germany or in another foreign country by the British forces. It will ensure that children who live abroad study roughly the same curriculum as is studied by children in this country.

Teachers (Resignations)

10. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers in the primary school sector have resigned in the last 12 months.

Mr. Butcher: The latest available data are for the year ending March 1987, when 12,730 teachers left full-time service in the maintained nursery and primary sector in England. Of these, 1,320 transferred to full-time service elsewhere in the maintained sector in England and Wales and 1,300 to part-time service in the maintained sector. A further 4,300 retired and 200 died.

Mr. Livsey: Even allowing for the fact that those figures are two years out of date, do they not suggest that there is a crisis in the primary school sector and that, even according to the Minister's own figures, 15,000 teachers a year will be leaving the profession by 1995? What does he intend to do about preventing primary school teachers from leaving their profession in droves?

Mr. Butcher: The hon. Gentleman is utterly wrong. A substantial proportion of those who leave the profession do so for maternity or retirement reasons. That is evidence of a remarkably stable teaching force. As the interim advisory committee has reported, those who leave teaching to go into other professions represent about 1 per cent. of the teaching force. That cannot be described in any way in the terms that the hon. Gentleman used.

Mr. Soames: Will my hon. Friend commend to other local authorities the excellent scheme run by West Sussex county council to stay in touch with teachers who have left the profession, so that when they have finished whatever duties they may have had away from teaching they can be brought back in at an early stage?

Mr. Butcher: That is an excellent scheme. Through appropriate and imaginative measures, a large number of teachers can be persuaded to re-enter the profession. Their expertise will be greatly welcomed. I am sure that other local authorities are observing that experiment with great interest.

Ms. Armstrong: The Minister's answer confirms that the Government simply do not know what is going on in primary schools. Our evidence from local education authorities throughout the country is that the number of resignations this year is unprecedented. Britain has some of the best primary teaching in the world but the Government's policies are undermining it. What are the Government going to do to support and encourage primary teachers?

Mr. Butcher: One of the great strengths of the British system is the primary sector. Having visited Germany recently I am confirmed in that belief and I pay tribute to our primary school teachers. The Opposition's assertions have more to do with propaganda than with fact. In the primary sector we have a stable work force and the teaching force is behaving professionally. The facts on recruitment into teacher training colleges and loss to other professions confirm that we have a well-motivated and stable primary work force.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Lamond: Is the right hon. Lady aware of the divided families campaign which is concerned with the plight of a very large number of immigrant families who for nearly two decades now have been refused permission for their spouses and families to join them in Britain? Now, through the new DNA fingerprint tests, they can prove without a shadow of a doubt that those people are their families, yet they are still being refused permission to join their families in Britain. Should not something be done by the right hon. Lady to right that injustice, or will she have a nasty taste in her mouth every time she speaks of her concern for family life in Britain?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is aware that immigration into this country, including some of those people who have been waiting for a considerable time, is of the order of 40,000 to 50,000 a year. That is as many as we can possibly cope with.

Q2. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Sumberg: Will my right hon. Friend send a message of sympathy to the hard-pressed rail and tube travellers who will undergo yet another strike tomorrow? Will she join me in condemning the union leadership that has inflicted this inconvenience on the public? Does she agree that as in previous public sector disputes, the total and complete silence of the Leader of the Opposition makes him the strikers' friend?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. The unions have given no thought to the general public. My hon. Friend is aware that the Government are taking practical steps to help the public get to work tomorrow. Of course the dispute is for the management and unions to resolve, but I believe that three points should be absolutely clear. First, the National Union of Railwaymen and not British Rail has broken the 1956 agreement by refusing to use the established negotiating machinery to settle the question of basic pay. I note that at least one other union has honoured that agreement. Secondly, the British Railways board has offered to meet the NUR at any time and any place to resolve the other outstanding issue—the negotiating machinery. Thirdly, despite the NUR's advertising, the small print makes it absolutely clear that it will not negotiate without pre-conditions.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister constructively and immediately assist in efforts to resolve the rail dispute —first, by strongly encouraging both sides to go back to the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service to

discuss all the matters in dispute and, secondly, by stopping those of her interventions that are intended, for obvious partisan reasons, to inflame conflict?

The Prime Minister: I note that the right hon. Gentleman has no thought whatsoever for the travelling public. *[Interruption.]* Had he listened to my previous reply, he might have found most of the answers to his question. This is a dispute for the management of British Rail and the unions to resolve. With regard to pay, there is a 1956 agreement under which, before industrial action is taken, there should be recourse to the railway staff national tribunal. The NUR has broken that agreement on pay. That tribunal will sit tomorrow and the Transport Salaried Staffs Association is going to it. With regard to negotiating machinery, British Rail has offered to meet the NUR at any time and any place, including ACAS, to try to resolve the other outstanding issues. The NUR is setting pre-conditions to meeting British Rail, which is totally contrary to the 1956 agreement. It should go to ACAS without pre-conditions.

Mr. Kinnock: If the Prime Minister really wants to help rail users, will she come back to the real world of the present and deal with the issue in hand? It must be clear, even to the Prime Minister, that this dispute can be urgently resolved if both parties go to ACAS to discuss all the issues. I urge both parties to do just that. Will she urge them to do that, in the national interest?

The Prime Minister: The National Union of Railwaymen—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister must be given a chance to answer.

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, there is a 1956 agreement—*[Interruption.]* Yes. Clearly, Labour does not believe in keeping its agreements. There is a 1956 agreement under which, before there is any —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must be able to hear the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: Before there is any industrial dispute, there is a 1956 agreement under which pay should be resolved by using the established negotiating machinery to settle the question of basic pay. The National Union of Railwaymen has broken that agreement. Another union has accepted it and is going to the tribunal to use its services. British Rail has said that it will meet the NUR at any time and any place to try to resolve the outstanding issues on negotiating machinery, but not with pre-conditions such as that which the NUR has set.

Mr. Kinnock: If the Prime Minister will not act responsibly and do her duty as she should—*[Interruption.]*—will she at least stop being irresponsible and accept the common-sense argument put by *The Daily Telegraph* this morning that to "outlaw strikes" in public services

"would be an indefensible attack on the employee's liberty to withhold . . . labour and would be 'unBritish' and could have no place in a polity founded upon freedom"?

Or does the Prime Minister think that the civil right of free trade unionism should stop the other side of the Polish border?

The Prime Minister: Why does the right hon. Gentleman not have a flash of responsibility for once, and condemn the strike? Why does he not ask the National Union of Railwaymen to go to arbitration, which is where they should go and to settle their claim that way, and support the travelling public for once?

Yorkshire and Humberside

Q3. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to visit Yorkshire and Humberside.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Mr. Kirkhope: Will my right hon. Friend soon be able to visit the Yorkshire and Humberside region? She will see that the gross domestic product has doubled since 1979 and that 17,500 more companies have been established there since 1983. All of that was enhanced by the tremendous success of the urban development corporations of Leeds and Sheffield, which are presently celebrating their first anniversary. Does that not give the lie to the so-called north-south divide?

The Prime Minister: Yes. The creation of jobs, enterprise and a higher standard of living are spreading throughout the country because of the policies that we have pursued. As my hon. Friend knows, I was in Leeds last December, visiting Asda and seeing for myself the tremendous prosperity that exists there and also seeing that the many successful companies are not only creating jobs and raising the standard of living but have a very great community spirit. They presented a large cheque for about £650,000 to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Altogether an excellent record.

Mr. Rees: Yorkshire and Humberside are doing very well on the commercial front—we are all very proud of them—aided by Labour-controlled local authorities. However, manufacturing is in decline, and it has declined mainly since the right hon. Lady's Government came to office. Will she do anything about manufacturing, or is she concerned only about commerce?

The Prime Minister: The north is doing very well indeed because of the economic policies of this Government and because the people have the wit to take up opportunities and do well for themselves by their own efforts, because the enterprise and tax systems urge and encourage them to do so. That is the record of this Government, and may it long continue. The right hon. Gentleman will know that investment in manufacturing is at an all-time record, which augurs very well for the future.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. Friend remember the winter of 1978-79, when people were stranded on railway stations, could not bury their dead, and their children could not have a schools——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question should be about Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Dickens: In Yorkshire and in Humberside. Does she recall what the people did after the so-called strikers' friends did nothing about that? They voted in a Conservative Government.

The Prime Minister: Yes, I recall that the then Government were practically run by the unions. The people voted out the Labour Government, reversed the decline, and we have had unrivalled prosperity ever since.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cartwright: In view of the Prime Minister's well-publicised role as a leader of the campaign against the dangers of the greenhouse effect, why do her Government not accept the amendment to the Electricity Bill, which was carried with all-party support in the other place? It would require electricity suppliers to prove that they are conducting energy efficient activities. Which is most important to the Prime Minister, making the electricity industry attractive to investors, or ensuring that it is genuinely energy efficient?

The Prime Minister: There is, of course, a duty of energy efficiency. If the hon. Gentleman had followed the figures he would know that we are now producing about 25 per cent. more goods than we were producing in 1973, but in 1973 we were using up more energy than we are now. That has been the very great achievement of energy efficiency. Naturally, people will go on trying to get better and better value for money.

Q5. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mitchell: I welcome the recently announced 6 per cent. decrease in the crime figures, unprecedented in the past 25 years, but does my right hon. Friend agree that in making progress in this important matter, it is extremely important to ensure that parents are held more responsible for the actions of their children?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. Like my hon. Friend, I welcome the recent figures showing a reduction in recorded crime, although, like him, we are still very concerned about the amount of violent crime. I agree that, if parents do not teach children right and wrong and to abide by the law, no other substitute organisation can do so. It is best that children should know those things before they go to school so that teachers can reinforce what they have learnt at home.

Q6. **Mr. John Fraser:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fraser: Following her recent conversations on the subject, what prospect does the Prime Minister hold out for the early release of Nelson Mandela and the commutation of the mass death sentence on 14 people from the town of Upington in South Africa?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, we have constantly raised the question of the release of Nelson Mandela. I do not believe that any negotiations about the future of South Africa could start between all the peoples who make up that country until his release and the release of two other people there with him are brought about. I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman when that will come about. I believe that there is a change in South Africa, and that the most important thing is to get the Namibian agreement well under way. I hope that after the next election there will be a movement towards genuine negotiations on the part of all peoples in South Africa, but they would have to be preceded by the release of Mr. Mandela.

BILL PRESENTED

Dangerous Dogs

Dame Janet Fookes, supported by Mr. Greg Knight, Mr. John Cartwright and Mr. Matthew Taylor, presented a Bill to extend the powers available to a court on a complaint under section 2 of the Dogs Act 1981 together with additional rights of appeal and enhanced penalties: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 7 July and to be printed. [Bill 175.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the five motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Resolved,

That the draft Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Modification) Order 1989 to referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Recovery Vehicles (Number of Vehicles Recovered) Order (Northern Ireland) 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Recovery Vehicles (Number of Vehicles Recovered) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Hovercraft (Application of Enactments) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Visiting Forces and International Headquarters (Application of Law) (Amendment) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Question agreed to.

Points of Order

3.32 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) named me without observing the usual convention and courtesy of the House by notifying me of his intention to do so, although we had been going through the Division Lobbies only four or five minutes before. In column 45 of *Hansard* the hon. Gentleman is reported as saying that I had intervened in a vitriolic and trivial way but was not present to explain that to my constituents. *Hansard* does not make it clear that I did not intervene in yesterday's debate. As my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning pointed out later, the debate was entirely about the privatisation of water and not about the metering of water under the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Act 1988, which we debated last year.

I refer this matter to you, Mr. Speaker, because, while I realise that among your many duties you cannot be responsible for the actions of the BBC, that body unfortunately broadcast the incident to my constituents on Radio Solent. Every indication was given that I was not present in the House yesterday, which I was. Furthermore, as you know, Mr. Speaker, you kindly granted me an Adjournment debate in which I discussed the whole question of water metering and in which my hon. and learned Friend the Minister gave a number of undertakings for me to take back to my constituents. In the water metering trial on the Isle of Wight, no one has yet received a bill. There has been no dispute about the concept of metering, my constituents' concern is about the tariff.

Mr. Speaker: I have seen the report of the intervention yesterday by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin). The hon. Gentleman said nothing that was out of order, but I remind hon. Members that if they propose to refer to each other in a critical fashion, they should give notice of that intention to allow a rebuttal to be made at the time.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: I shall call the hon. Gentleman, but we cannot debate the matter further now.

Mr. Mullin: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is a perfectly simple explanation. I was referring to the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter), who had intervened earlier in the debate. I apologise to the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field). It was a simple slip of the tongue. However, the constituents of the hon. Member for Isle of Wight would be glad to hear from him in the course of our discussions on the Water Bill, because they are suffering bills of two, three or four times the normal amount.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot pursue that matter now.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that tomorrow the railway service of this country will be disrupted by a strike, which will also include Underground services. It will cause great difficulty for our staff in the House of Commons and especially catering and other associated staff. Have you received any representations from the local branch of the Transport and General Workers Union, which represents most of the staff here, and in particular have you received any representation from its most prominent member, the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Speaker: Members of unions do not normally make representations to me.

Representation on National Parks

3.35 pm

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to confer the right of greater local representation on national park planning committees.

The role of national parks has been debated in the House many times. The Bill that created the role of the national parks was introduced in the House 40 years ago and was given its Second Reading on 31 March 1949. The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Bill defined a national park as:

"an extensive area of outstanding beauty, suitable for open air recreation by the general public, but where the normal life of the existing community goes on."

Such an area may run to hundreds of square miles. The largest of the proposed national parks, the Lake District national park, is more than 800 square miles.

There are 10 national parks in England and Wales and none in Scotland. The 10 are the Peak district, the Lake district, Snowdonia, Dartmoor, the Pembrokeshire coast, the North Yorkshire, the Yorkshire dales, Exmoor, Northumberland and the Brecon Beacons, which represent an overall area of 5,251 sq. miles and a population, in 1981, of approximately 238,000.

When the Minister of Town and Country Planning, Mr. Silkin introduced the Bill he said, when dealing with representation on the national parks:

"The Bill provides that at least a quarter of the board or of the committee shall be appointed by the local planning authority on the nomination of the Minister, after consultation with the National Parks Commission. This will enable the Minister to ensure that persons are appointed to the parks committee without local interest or prejudices, who are able to put before the committee the so-called 'national' point of view".

Mr. Silkin went on to say:

"There are considerable safeguards in the Bill as well. There is the presence of not less than 25 per cent. of members on the park committees who will put forward national considerations."—[*Official Report*, 31 March 1949; Vol. 463, c. 1471—83.]

My argument is that there is insufficient local representation on those national parks. The Opposition spokesman at that time was Mr. W. S. Morrison, who was the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury. I am glad to see his successor, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, on the Front Bench today. He has a similar role to that of his predecessor.

Not all of the Dower report, which was the forerunner to the national parks, was accepted by the Government, although the setting up of the national parks had a broad welcome from Members of all parties. There was no Division on Second Reading. When the Dower report and the later Hobhouse report were commissioned, they came out not with the idea of a national parks committee, but with the idea of appointing a small, select group of people to administer the whole role of the national parks. However, neither the Government nor the Opposition of the time thought that acceptable. It was felt that a wider range of people should serve on the national parks.

It is difficult to bring forward specific guidelines for the national parks as a whole in this country because, although there are 10, they are not administered in the same manner. The Peak park board, which covers part of my constituency, is a joint board to which seven county or metropolitan councils appoint. The Lake district has a separate board and is distinct from Cumbria county council. Dartmoor, Northumberland, the Pembrokeshire coast and Snowdonia have single county committees, which is a slightly different way of administering those national parks. The Brecon Beacons, Exmoor, North Yorkshire and the Yorkshire Dales national parks have multi-county committees. Therefore, it is difficult to bring forward a set of proposals that could be applied to all our national parks.

However, I hope that what I am proposing will go some way to achieving balance in the administration of our national parks. I know that that view is shared by the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), who agrees that we should have more local representation from the local county councils and district councils. I argue strongly that it is the job and within the power of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to appoint people with national expertise in this area and that the local element should come from the councils.

It is the purpose of my Bill to ensure that two thirds of the appointments made by local authorities should have a residential qualification—gained by living in the area of the national park—or should be an elected member of a local authority serving the area of the national park. If a county council seat or division is part of a national park, those serving in that capacity should serve on the national park authority. That would mean that, of the total of 168 local authority appointees, 112 would fall in those categories. That is by no means a majority, because I recognise that the idea behind the "national park" is to give national significance to those parks.

There are 258 appointees in all—168 coming from the local authorities, as I have said, and 84 who are appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Therefore, while the Bill would not mean a predominance of local people, it would enable a national point of view to be expressed.

The local element in this is important because there is no other planning authority in the country where one can serve on a planning committee without meeting the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972, which states that a member of a planning board should be a local government elector for the area of the authority; or have occupied as owner or tenant, land or premises in the area for the whole of the preceding 12 months; or have worked in the area during the preceding 12 months, or have lived in the area during the whole of the preceding 12 months.

The Bill is meant as a way forward and as a way of bringing about some elected responsibility in the national parks administration without having to have full elections. I have doubts about full elections to the national parks committees, because it is not right to have an elected body to consider just one issue. I hope that, by striking the two thirds balance and by not saying that all county council nominees should come from the national parks, I have gone some way towards meeting some of the concerns about the establishment of the board.

I hope that I shall have the honour of bringing in my Bill, and I am glad that it will have cross-party support. The Bill aims to ensure locally elected representation on the national parks committees. It does not necessarily mean that locally elected representatives would be given a majority; it simply seeks to ensure that the 238,000 people who live in the national parks have access to elected

[Mr. Patrick McLoughlin]

representatives, because planning law for most of the rest of the country is dealt with through local representation. They, too, will have the accountability to the people who elect them to those bodies, thus bringing a more representative form of accountability to the national parks.

I know that the chances of the Bill reaching the statute book are somewhat remote at this stage in the parliamentary year. However, I hope that this important issue will eventually be considered by the Select Committee on the Environment. It is an important issue. Everyone wants to see the national parks continue and thrive in their present form. I am concerned to see some form of local accountability, as I believe that is vital.

3.45 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. Member seeking to oppose the Bill?

Mr. Barnes: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I have listened carefully to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin). He obviously made some serious points about extending the provision to local representation, but he said that the Bill was intended to arrange for two thirds of the appointees to a planning board to be resident in the area or to be elected representatives serving in that particular area.

I believe that the hon. Member presented the Bill because of his experiences with the Peak park joint planning board, in which he has a considerable interest because of his constituency connections. The problem is that it is over the top to suggest two thirds of the appointees for the Peak park joint planning board. That provision is merely part of the hon. Gentleman's general vendetta against Derbyshire county council.

The situation in Derbyshire is that the Peak park joint planning board has 34 members. Eleven are appointed by the Secretary of State, and I accept that those can be people who have national considerations to bring to bear, as well as important local ones, and 23 members are appointed from various councils, including eight from Derbyshire county council. The problem is that many of those, although not from within the specific area, have a considerable interest in the provisions of the Peak park joint planning board and are willing to devote resources and to assist in the building up of the provisions, which are important not just for the area itself but for the whole of Derbyshire and many wider areas, because those areas are represented by members of the board. There may be a need for some rationalisation of membership and there is obviously a case for greater democratisation so that the area is reasonably represented.

However, the proposals of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West would lead to a situation where those members with outside but legitimate interests in the Peak park joint planning board would be eliminated. On those grounds, I oppose the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: The question is, That the hon. Member have leave to bring in his Bill. As many as are of that opinion say, "Aye".

Hon. Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: To the contrary, "No."

Hon. Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-West (Mr. Barnes) must sustain his opposition by saying "No".

Mr. Barnes: No.

Mr. Speaker: I think the Ayes have it. The Ayes have it.

Question agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Patrick McLoughlin, Mr. Michael Jopling, Sir Michael Shaw, Mr. A. J. Beith, Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Mr. Cecil Franks, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Richard Livsey, Mr. David Davis, Mr. William Hague and Mr. David Curry.

Representation on National Parks

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin accordingly presented a Bill to confer the right of greater local representation on national park planning committees: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 7 July and to be printed. [Bill 176.]

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not a convention of this place that if one speaks against a Ten-minute Bill, one is normally expected to vote against it? Do I take it that we are now allowed to speak against it, but are not required to vote against it?

Mr. Speaker: The rule is plain. If an hon. Member objects to a Ten-minute Bill he must carry his objection to the extent of shouting, "No." it is not necessary to divide if the Ayes have it, and that is what happened today.

Orders of the Day

Water Bill

[2ND ALLOTTED DAY]

Lords amendments further considered.

Clause 146

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUTHORITY

Lords amendment: No. 155, in page 146, line 10, at end insert—

"( ) Every such report shall set out any directions under section 142 above which have been given to the Authority during the year to which the report relates."

3.50 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I beg to move, amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, in line 4, at end, add

'with particular reference to any directions concerning the condition of each classification of controlled waters, including the quality of water.'

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 156.

Mr. Roberts: This is the last parliamentary debate on the Government's water suicide Bill. Even before its implementation and the creation of 10 private monopolies, the Bill is unpopular.

The Government's proposals for water privatisation are unpopular before compulsory metering or a flat rate water poll tax have been introduced. They are unpopular even before the spectacle of a flotation fiasco doomed to partial or total failure despite the hidden write-off of £5·5 billion debt. They are unpopular even before the massive water price increases and the health-threatening increase in disconnections, which will be an inevitable consequence of a doctrinaire obsession with privatisation for its own sake.

The final arrogance of the Government and the Secretary of State for the Environment was revealed in the Lobby last night when they voted to destroy any pretence they had to being concerned about cleaning up our water environment. Never mind the polls that have revealed the general public's and the informed public's opinion of water privatisation and their opposition to it. Never mind the by-election and Euro-election results. The Government have dealt with the green vote—an expression of concern about the environment—by ridiculing the Green party and its policies. The Government are making a great mistake by pushing the Bill through and by disregarding public opinion and our water environment.

The creation of 10 private water monopolies will never be acceptable to the British people. Last night, the Government rejected implementing European Community standards of drinking water by 1993. Proper public consultation on land disposal was also rejected by the Government. In Committee and elsewhere they have rejected proposals for land to pass to the National Rivers Authority. They have also rejected our proposals for guarantees of access to the land owned by the water authorities.

The Government have agreed to the disposal of land, especially that of natural beauty and in sensitive areas. They have put a moratorium on sewage discharge prosecutions and they have rejected proposals for the adequate sampling and controlling of river quality. They have rejected our opposition to sub-contracting and the contracting out of NRA functions. The gamekeeper-poacher relationship will therefore remain. They have also rejected our proposals for information on pollution and the integrated water cycle to be made available. They have also rejected amendments that we have tabled for access to other information.

It is outrageous for the Government to pretend that the Bill is an environmental step forward. They do so in total disregard of the facts. To justify that claim, they hold up the creation of the NRA. Today let us test how sincere the Government are in wanting the NRA to be able to do an effective and worthwhile job and in wanting to give it the staff, resources and powers necessary to do so. Once again, the Bill, the Government—and, I am afraid, the National Rivers Authority—will be found wanting. If the Government are serious about the NRA, they will accept amendment (a), which would strengthen its reporting duties.

Lords amendment No. 155 requires the NRA's annual report, which is an obligation under clause 146, to contain details of directions given to the NRA by the Secretary of State under clause 142. The position needs clarifying because of the somewhat clouded statement in the Bill that the Secretary of State will make directions. The amendments highlight the need for an open and accountable NRA with sufficient resources to carry out its work and a clear statutory framework in which to ensure the reduction of pollution and the improvement of the environment. The Government gave only limited ground on the accountability of the NRA during discussions on the Bill in another place. They gave more ground, we admit, on the NRA's advisory committees, but they do not have any power. What will the environmental programme consist of during the next five to 10 years? How will it prevent a go-slow in the improvement of sewage treatment works and other pollutants?

The Government have given no ground on securing a broad representation of interests to serve on the NRA, or on making its proceedings publicly accountable. It is clear that the NRA advisory committee, headed by Lord Crickhowell, is not entirely happy with the Government's proposals for the NRA, especially on staffing and on the amendment, slipped into the Bill during its last stage in another place, relating to a moratorium on prosecutions for pollution from sewage. Indeed, Lord Crickhowell has made it clear that the proposed staffing and resources will be inadequate for the NRA's functions.

It was interesting to note two advertisements in the same edition of the *New Scientist* on 24 June 1989. The first said:

"Influence the Environment; Enjoy the Rewards. Tales of the River Bank. National Rivers Authority. Pollution Officers £9,500 rising to £13,000."

On the next page another advertisement stated:

"Scientists/Engineers. Senior Investigations Scientist/Engineer. Thames Water. £16,000 to £18,000, plus car allowance."

Someone can earn £9,500 rising to £13,000 as a controller of pollution, but £16,000 to £18,000 as an avoider of the controllers of pollution. The NRA is allowed only to offer

[Mr. Roberts]

that salary scale, so it will not recruit staff of the quality and scientific experience needed. The water companies are offering a great deal more money and many more perks.

Why was the NRA established? The Government wanted a successful flotation and they needed to take away as many of the non-profit-making functions of the water authorities as possible, despite destroying the concept of river management. They are giving those functions, through an act of nationalisation—which it is—to the National Rivers Authority. Water resource planning and licensing of abstraction, monitoring of licences, environmental quality and pollution control, land drainage and flood protection, the maintenance, improvement and development of fisheries in inland waters, conservation and recreation and the navigation responsibilities of three water authorities are all to be given to the NRA so that, on privatisation, people will not be deterred from buying into the water companies.

Having given all those environmental functions to the NRA, with its inadequate resources and staffing, there remains a list of environmental problems for which anyone buying into the privatised water companies will be responsible, and that will be the Government's downfall. Such people will be buying responsibility for the breakdown of the sewage storm overflows, recently reported in the press, which is polluting our rivers and water courses, and for the 20 per cent. of sewage works which have failed consent levels.

Those people will be buying responsibility for the 300 beaches that the Government have designated as bathing beaches. The royal commission on environmental pollution identified 600 beaches in Britain as bathing beaches, but 33 per cent. of the 300 beaches, let alone the 600, breached EEC standards. They are buying responsibility for declining river quality. In the 1980s, river quality has declined alarmingly, and after 10 years of a Tory Government, it has worsened. The 1985 river quality survey showed a net deterioration of 803 km, or 2·5 per cent. of total river length in England and Wales. That decline has continued with the net deterioriation of 514 km in 1985. The people buying the private water companies will be buying responsibility for cleaning up our rivers.

4 pm

The Government herald the Mersey clean-up as the great feather in their environmentalist cap. During questions on the environment, Conservative Back Benchers plant questions about how much the Rhine pollutes the North sea, because it pollutes it more than the Thames does. But such questions ignore the fact that the River Mersey pollutes the Irish sea, one of the most polluted seas in the world, with sewage sludge dumping and the rest, for which the Government are directly responsible.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that this is not a planted intervention, and that I am simply trying to follow what he says. If, over the past 10 years under the existing structure, the Government have failed in their responsibility to ensure the environmental purity and supply of water in the way that he has described, may there not be a case for changing the system?

Mr. Roberts: I suggest a change in the Government. We have had 10 years of Tory Government and 10 years of neglect and pollution, and now their answer to the problem is doctrinaire privatisation, to which the majority of the British public are opposed. It would be good to have a change in Government, in attitude and in the financial regime under which public sector water authorities function, leading to their democratisation.

Mr. Adley: The hon. Gentleman is not helping his own case. During the early stages of the Bill, I voted against the Government on the powers of the NRA. Cannot the hon. Gentleman comprehend that his doctrinaire comments do not add to an intelligent discussion of some of the important points at issue?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman started this by his provocative intervention, which needed a provocative answer. We require a Government who are not committed to privatising our water industry for doctrinaire reasons, but who are committed to the public expenditure and borrowing necessary to put our water environment in order. That is a reasonable point to make in a political chamber of this nature.

I was describing the responsibilities that the people to whom the Government are trying to sell the water industry will be buying, and I was talking about the so-called Mersey clean-up.

A new definition of river quality is needed, for we must be able not only to measure dissolved oxygen as an indicator of sewage pollution, but to use other techniques agreed throughout Europe and in this country to measure chemical pollution. That would alter the whole picture in terms of what is considered to be a clean or dirty river.

The proposal to take raw sewage from the Mersey and pipe it to Sanden dock in my constituency, and there turn it into sewage sludge after only primary treatment, before dumping it back whence it came, in the Irish sea, in the form of polluted, poisonous sludge, leaves much to be desired—especially in the light of claims that the Mersey will be cleaned up, when in fact it is full of heavy metals, printed circuit boards and many other pollutants.

Sewage sludge dumping is a major environmental problem and one that the North sea convention, to which the Secretary of State for the Environment is a signatory, intends to end, yet the people buying into privatised water will be buying the dumping of sewage sludge in the North sea. If the Government force the implementation of the North sea convention, as they should, shareholders will also be buying the responsibility for finding alternative ways of disposing of sewage sludge, other than by dumping it in the Irish sea and the North sea.

Responsibility for doing something about the water industry's aging infrastructure will also be purchased by those buying into water authorities. There is massive underground dereliction. Of the 150,000 miles of sewers, 10 per cent. are more than 100 years old. In 1986, there were 3,500 collapses and 15,000 blockages requiring excavation. In addition, 20 to 30 per cent. of the water leaving reservoirs is, to use the industry's euphemism, unaccounted for. In other words, it leaks out of an aging system. All those problems will be the responsibility of the private sector.

The Government try to convince the House and the public that the private sector—and the free market, with its profit motive—will deal with all the problems that exist,

and that the National Rivers Authority will ensure that they will be dealt with. If the Government are serious about caring for our water environment they will leave the NRA to determine its own pay and staffing levels, which it is not free to do under the current proposals. We should explore the NRA's scope to undertake capital works and the right to borrow both in providing flood defences and making environmental improvements—a power which the Government constantly rejected in Committee.

The Government argue fallaciously that the Bill is an environmental measure because it will release the water industry from the controls of the public sector borrowing requirement, and that the private sector will be able to borrow all the money that it needs to deal with the problems I have outlined. That is nonsense. How can there be any return on money borrowed in the private sector to undertake environmental improvements on which there will be no profit?

The truth is that, as the Government admitted, privatisation will cost the consumer. Nothing will come from the Exchequer, and there will be no cushion for the poor, who will face massive increases in water charges. The Government could at a stroke release water authorities from PSBR restrictions that have been imposed for many years, to allow them to borrow the same money from the same source as under privatisation, to be spent on the same environmental projects. It is economic nonsense to say that it is wrong for the public sector to do that, but right for the private sector.

It may be argued that no public sector operation would be allowed by any Treasury to breach the public sector borrowing requirement. Why, then, does BNFL suffer from no such restrictions? It is set up in such a way that it does not have to suffer from them, despite being in the public sector; so the Government must not tell us that the same cannot apply to the water industry.

On Second Reading in the other place Lord Crickhowell, whom the Government have just appointed so-called independent chairman of the National Rivers Authority and who used to be a Tory Cabinet Minister, said that he hoped that the Government would, in the financial arrangements made with the National Rivers Authority outside the terms of the Bill, allow the maximum freedom in management terms. There is no likelihood of that happening.

Various Government statements about the likely contents of the financial memorandum between the Government and the NRA fell somewhat short of the advisory committee's demands, although one concession was made: the control by the Secretary of State and the Treasury over staffing numbers was removed, although detailed control remains over the terms and conditions of staff, once appointed. That is ludicrous. Overall control of the budget has clearly been ceded to the NRA, leaving central Government with a right of veto over comparatively detailed matters only. Amendment (a) to Lords amendment 190 would have given the NRA some opportunity to take the initiative in setting out a likely management structure for its staff, once appointed, with the overall package rather than the individual elements then being effectively subject to the decision of the Secretary of State and the Treasury.

In regard to borrowing, it quickly became clear in the other place that the Government's real view of the NRA was very different from that which it is trying to portray in public debates. The NRA will have, in the Government's view, only a very limited need for capital resources: that is what they said. Such capital spending as it undertakes will generally be financed from its income through fees and charges. The water undertakers, private landowners and industrial concerns, rather than the NRA, will carry the main responsibility for reducing pollution and cleaning up the country's waterways. Some hope. The myth of the release from the public sector borrowing requirement is clearly illustrated here: all the essential environmental functions of the NRA remain in the public sector, and have not been released from PSBR control.

The NRA will be placed essentially in a monitoring and sampling role, providing evidence of breaches of discharge consents for the purposes of prosecutions. It will not have much joy under the present Government, because they will not allow the prosecutions. It will also issue licences relating to levels of consents. Breaches of those will be allowed in any event. Apart from flood defence, in which respect the NRA will inherit a substantial responsibility to be exercised with the input of the regional flood defence committees—with the majority of local authority members—the direct impact of the NRA's capital works for environmental improvement will be very small.

Several questions remain to be answered by the Government. To what degree can the NRA be considered an environmental agency, when it can do so little itself? The Government say that the existing position, whereby the water authorities police themselves for pollution, is wrong, and then go on to say that the Bill will separate the poacher from the gamekeeper. They neglect to emphasise that the NRA can—the Government admit that it will, and that they will encourage it to do so—contract back many of its functions, including regulatory functions, to the private water companies. Thus gamekeeper and poacher will again be one and the same—this time in the private sector, where profit is the motive rather than the environment and the provision of service to the consumer.

How will the Government guarantee, contrary to all the evidence of recent years, that the private sector will clean up its act? The private sector, the profit motive, has created pollution. It has never willingly cleaned it up, not without Government intervention and strong regulation. The National Rivers Authority will not have the staff, resources or powers to perform that task.

4.15 pm

Writing in *The Guardian* last week, Michael Carney of the Water Authorities Association said, in effect, that money spent on improving the quality of drinking water diverted money away from the improvement of the environment. What does the Secretary of State consider the environmental programme to consist of over the next five to 10 years? How can it help the environment to go slow on improving sewage treatment works and other pollutants which affect the quality of drinking water as well as river water?

It is interesting to note the way in which the Water Authorities Association comes to the aid of the Government. That organisation is quoted in support of privatisation and in support of the Government's decision not to accept the Lords amendments. We have statements signed by the chair of the association. Such statements are issued as though they were independent and non-political.

We are talking of 10 water authorities, the 10 chairs of which are appointed by a Tory Secretary of State for the Environment. Indeed, some of them are card-carrying

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members of the Conservative party and all of them are likely to receive a fourfold increase in salaries when their authorities are privatised. It is hardly surprising that this so-called independent source is in favour of the Government's proposals. It represents about the only set of people—apart from the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State—who are in favour of them.

What claim can the National Rivers Authority have to be a vigorous environmental agency, when its meetings are closed to the public and its members consist of appointees of the Secretary of State, of the same ilk as the 10 chairs of the existing water authorities?

We have just witnessed the appointment of Julian Taylor and Wyndham Rogers Coltman to the National Rivers Authority. I accept that Mr. Taylor is famous—famous as the former chairman of the Manchester Ship Canal Company which, it may be recalled, began to initiate the import of waste from America, to be dumped on Manchester Ship Canal Company land and disposed of as a profit-making venture. The ship canal company is not famous for its record in cleaning up pollution. It is famous for contributing significantly to the pollution of the Mersey and the Irish sea. Those are the sort of political appointments that the Government have been making to the National Rivers Authority.

There was considerable disquiet in the National Rivers Authority about the implications of the transitional measure introduced by the Government on Report in the other place, whereby samples of river water taken by the transfer date were inapplicable to prosecutions mounted after that date. The Government thereby announced, in effect, a one-year moratorium for water undertakers and their sewage treatment works, since non-compliance over a year in 95 per cent. of cases must be demonstrated in relation to each parameter before a case can be founded. It has been obvious to public observers that the Government have cut the ground from under the feet of the National Rivers Authority at the beginning of its activities.

It will be recalled that Opposition Members argued at the outset of the Committee stage, and again in the other place, that the authority should be established for a year to enable it to commence its work, before the handover to the private sector took place. The Government attacked that proposal, describing it as a delaying measure. The wisdom of our proposal is now clear to see.

If the Government will not concede that dirty water remains dirty irrespective of the transfer date, they should at least concede that giving the National Rivers Authority a year in which to establish itself—before facing it with privatised organisations which have the prime motivation of circumventing its findings and making a profit—would be the better course.

The truth is that the Government do not want to allow the National Rivers Authority to establish itself as a real policing and monitoring power in the land, for that would be another deterrent to those whom the Government hope might wish to buy into the privatised water industry.

We need a body similar to the National Rivers Authority that is provided with the resources, staff and powers to deal not just with the water environment but with the environment generally—air, land and water. They are all related. A strong environmental protection agency must be established in this country. That is Labour party policy. That agency will be established by the next Labour Government and the National Rivers Authority will be part of it.

Strong regional environmental protection agencies are also needed to look after the water environment as well as the environment generally, and strong staffing at regional level must be provided. Social ownership of the water industry is needed, controlled and run by elected tiers of regional government. Employees and consumers must play a part in its management. That smacks of democracy and causes the Secretary of State for the Environment to groan.

The British public do not want privatised water companies. They are not expected to be successful. The British public fear the worst. All the evidence is that their fears are well founded. The National Rivers Authority will be inadequate, because it is to be provided with inadequate powers, inadequate resources and insufficient staff. The success of the privatisation of the water industry depends upon there being an inadequate National Rivers Authority. Nobody in his right mind would buy shares in a privatised water industry if he knew that he would have to take on responsibility for cleaning up our water. All he wants to do is make a profit out of his investment.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): One might have supposed that the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), speaking from the Opposition Front Bench, would be seeking support from other quarters of the House, apart from his own party, but he has made a pretty poor fist of it.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Adley: The hon. Gentleman should take a leson from the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who recognises from time to time that if he wants to draw support from beyond the ranks of his own party there are ways of going about it.

Mr. Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Adley: The hon. Gentleman wants to intervene before I have even started.

Mr. Roberts: I rise just to make the point that so far support for our policies by Conservative Members has not changed the Bill one little bit.

Mr. Adley: With respect, this is a parliamentary democracy. If it were the policy of the hon. Gentleman's party to change the electoral system, that might be an opportunity for a different debate on a different day—*[Interruption.]* It is no use the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) waving his arms around. I propose to make a short speech, but the hon. Member for Bootle and his hon. Friends are doing their utmost to prevent some of us from trying to support these amendments.

I want to ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, during this brief debate, he can reassure me that I should go into the Lobby with him later this evening. Having been a Member of Parliament for a few years and having seen the state into which the Labour party managed to drag our economy, I have very little confidence that all the grandiose plans that the hon. Member for Bootle described a few moments ago will ever come to fruition. The three initials that live in the

memory from the years of Labour Government are not NRA but IMF. Before contemplating the future of the water industry or any other industry, we should contemplate the way in which any Government can influence the economic progress of the country.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend recognises that there is a conflict between the environmental disciplines placed in the hands of the National Rivers Authority and the effect that those disciplines may have on the sale price of the water companies. I hope that he can convince me that the Government have got the balance right. I certainly look forward to hearing what my right hon. Friend has to say.

I was happy to vote for the Bill on Second Reading because I believe that the National Rivers Authority represents an important step forward, as I said in my first intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Bootle. The separation of functions is important. It is only a pity that the hon. Gentleman was so churlish as not to be prepared to recognise the advantages that that proposal could mean for water supply and environmental pollution improvements in Britain.

I do not go along with the proposition that privatisation is a panacea for all the industry's ills or that it is a diabolical plot to poison our constituents. However, the number of public telephone boxes now in operation that were formerly out of action and vandalised when British Telecom was in the public sector does not lead me to the same conclusion as the hon. Member for Bootle—that there is a dichotomy between private sector operation and good public service. There are plenty of examples in the privatisations of the past few years to show that good private sector management can provide as good, if not better, service to the consumer at just as acceptable a cost as it was provided in the public sector.

Finally, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can convince me that the Government have got the right balance between sales price and environmental discipline.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): The debate about the ability of the NRA to publish more facts than is provided for in the Bill is essential. The problem is that when the NRA was mooted and debated thoroughly in Committee, it was widely welcomed by hon. Members on both sides as an essential body for environmental protection in the water industry. It was felt that the NRA would be effective. When we examined the record of our rivers and water policy of the past 15 years, we all welcomed the introduction of the NRA. During the passage of the Bill through the House, the NRA appears to have become less effective. We know that it will not be adequately funded to carry out its duties in the way that we would wish. That is regrettable as apparently the NRA will not be able to publish sufficient information by which we can judge its effectiveness.

We should support the amendment which would enable the NRA to report on water quality and the status of our rivers and to run from one year to the next in saying what progress it is making in cleaning up the water environment. But it looks as though that will not happen. If the amendment is not accepted, the Secretary of State will have a free hand, and the NRA will be able to publish the minimum amount of information by which to judge its effectiveness. I hope that the Secretary of State will correct me if that is not the case, but it appears that that will happen under the Bill.

The amendment highlights the need for an open and accountable National Rivers Authority and will ensure that sufficient resources are available to enable it to function properly. The problem is that the Treasury will have to fund the NRA in part. As has already been mentioned, given the salaries of staff in the NRA, it will be unable adequately to compete with the powerful water plcs. It is wrong that the water plcs should have everything loaded in their favour while the environmental protection agency—the NRA—will be unable to protect the environment adequately. Any pretensions that the Government have to protecting the environment are being thrown away by diluting the effectiveness of the NRA. The fact that Lord Crickhowell is unhappy about the NRA does not augur well for the future.

The Government would be wise to listen to the arguments that the NRA should be more effective and better financed and have the high-quality staff that are necessary to monitor water effectively. The danger is that, in the first years of operation, the water plcs will have all the resources necessary to test water quality yet the NRA will be scraping around looking for laboratory facilities to do that testing.

4.30pm

There was considerable debate on these matters in the other place. There is a case for freeing the NRA in terms of pay and staff structure. There is a case, too, for giving it more freedom to undertake capital works and extending its right to borrow for flood protection schemes and so on. That information should be published annually, as the Lords amendment requires. The NRA should have maximum freedom to manage.

The Government's view is very different. They wish to limit the NRA's capital resources. They cannot say that they are producing an effective gamekeeper and then proceed to neuter its effectiveness. I fear for the future unless the NRA can publish the requisite information by which the public can judge its effectiveness and unless the Government are prepared to provide it with the staff and facilities to ensure that it is a proper environmental agency. I hope that the Secretary of State can reassure me, but I fear that he faces an uphill task.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State knows, I am one of those Conservative Members who, since Second Reading, have consistently opposed the Bill as being unwanted and unnecessary. I associate myself, however, with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley). If the Opposition were seeking to maintain cross-party support in these debates, I regret to say that the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) did their cause no good.

Mr. Allan Roberts: There has been cross-party support. There have been a few "rebels", as the Conservative party likes to portray them in the press. Conservative Members have made no significant attempt to alter or defeat any part of the Bill.

Mr. Winterton: That is hardly an appropriate intervention. I should have thought that voting in this place showed an intention to defeat a particular measure,

[Mr. Winterton]

and perhaps that is the only truly democratic way of going about it. If the hon. Member for Bootle looks at the political position of those who oppose the measure, he will see that there was support across the spectrum of the broad church of the Tory party. My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch is traditionally put on the Left of the Tory party whereas I am traditionally put on its Right. There are others in between. There was a broad church of people—*[Interruption.]* Indeed, it did not, but that has not prevented us from showing our feelings vocally and participating, when appropriate, in debates.

Because the NRA is perhaps the only true safeguard in the Bill for the consumer, the amendments are relevant. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can make some concessions. If the National Rivers Authority has inadequate funds and powers to do its job, the Bill will be a fraud. There will be no protection for the consumer or the environment.

One reason why I have consistently opposed the Bill in recent times is that I do not believe that a private monopoly is more efficient or beneficial to the country than a public monopoly. A monopoly exists. Therefore, the National Rivers Authority is the one and only safeguard. If it cannot match the remuneration that will be offered to the staff of the new private water undertakers and if it has inadequate resources for capital expenditure, it cannot fulfil the role that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intends for it in the provision of water and sewerage facilities.

If matters are to improve after the Bill, will the National Rivers Authority be able to assist my constituents in the Wildboarclough valley, who were recently devastated by a flash flood? I am ready to be persuaded to the contrary by my right hon. Friend, but the North West water authority is not prepared to take any responsibility for what happened. It will undertake no remedial works—not even restore the Clough brook, which flows into the Dane, to its original course. It will be the responsibility of the county council, as the highway authority, and local farmers and riparian owners.

Will the Bill improve matters? Will the National Rivers Authority be prepared to spend some money on flood protection in the Wildboarclough valley and the surrounding areas and try to ensure that another flood such as the one that affected my constituency on 24 May will not occur again and that the devastation will be reduced?

It is extraordinary how the river authorities and, I suppose, the new private undertakings will ensure that people who extract water in any place throughout the United Kingdom will have to pay a fee. They currently pay a fee to the North West water authority and other water authorities. The North West water authority currently takes no responsibility for, and is not even prepared to assist in repairing, the dreadful damage that occurred.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): My hon. Friend is clearly approaching his peroration. He said that the only protection for the consumer will be through the National Rivers Authority, though that ignores the role of the Director General of Water Services. First, will he explain how, but for privatisation, the NRA would ever have been set up by any Government? Secondly, what protection is given to the consumer under present arrangements by which water authorities set standards and also police themselves?

Mr. Winterton: Those matters have been covered extremely adequately. The tragedy is that they could have been dealt with without privatising the water undertakings.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I agree with the hon. Gentleman's case, which he is making most persuasively. To aid his argument, may I point out that the North West water authority has given deemed consent under the existing arrangements to 200 companies to pollute the River Mersey. Is that not an example of irresponsibility—the very point that the hon. Gentleman is making? There have been paltry fines of £600 or so on average in the past few years when massive pollution has been taking place. Will the position be made worse by the new regulations?

Mr. Winterton: I am tempted to go back over the many hours of debate that have taken place in the House and elsewhere, but that would be inappropriate because we are considering specific amendments that have been passed in another place. We should be directing our remarks to the role and responsibility of the National Rivers Authority and the resources that it will have available to fulfil its vital duties on behalf of the consumer.

Unless my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can meet some of the opinions and concerns expressed in this short debate and articulated clearly here and in another place, I shall have no alternative but to support the Opposition's amendments. Having said that, I point out to the hon. Member for Bootle that any Government would use all the powers of the establishment that they could muster in such circumstances. A Labour Government would do precisely the same: they would muster their votes to ensure that any opposition—even from their own supporters—was crushed and brushed out of the way. That does not stop hon. Members who sincerely believe what they are saying standing up and telling their Government, "I think that you should think again."

I am addressing my remarks to the amendments, but I should love to crush the Bill altogether. Even at this late stage I emphasise to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that it would be beneficial to the party and the country if the Bill were dropped. I have not met a single Tory who wants it. It is an electoral disaster and it will not achieve any of the objectives that the Government have set for it.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I shall pass over the speech of the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts)——

Mr. Allan Roberts: Why? It had some questions in it.

Mr. Ridley: —until the end of my brief remarks.

Mr. Roberts: Does that mean that the Secretary of State will answer the questions?

Mr. Ridley: I shall answer my two hon. Friends, the Members for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) and for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), who even expressed a tiny bit of reservation about some aspects of the Bill, surprising though that is. My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield said that he has never met a Tory who was in

favour of the Bill; I should love to have a cup of tea with him. He asked about flood protection. I can tell him that that will become a responsibility of the National Rivers Authority, which will have the full powers and finance to deal with it. I hope that that reassures him.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch sees a conflict in theory between the environmental duties of the water companies, as they will become, and the need of investors to invest viably and not at a loss. The Conservative party has always resolved that conflict through regulation—whether for health and safety matters, for fire precautions or to prevent child labour. That was so in the 19th century; it has been so for pollution control in recent years and it is so in this Bill, which vests the power to regulate in the NRA. The Bill also provides for account to be taken of the economic consequences of the standards that have to be met—first, in the setting of the K factor, which is the amount that the companies can charge their customers in the pricing formula, and secondly by allowing unforeseen investment arising from an unforeseen development, such as, for example, a higher European Community standard, to be met by the companies through the cost pass-through mechanism.

The Bill thus squares the dilemma in a way that it has not been squared under public ownership. As we have learnt from the Labour party—and as has been the experience of this Government—the only way of squaring it under public ownership was to bargain behind the closed doors of the Treasury for as much cash as one could get and then to adjust the standards to suit the cash. That is the wrong way round, and that point is crucial to the Bill.

I do not believe that the Lords amendment is a touchstone of the virility of the NRA, as the hon. Members for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) and for Bootle seem to think. Amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 155 would require directions under clause 102 on the classification of controlled waters to be set out in the NRA's annual report. There is no need for that, as the clause makes quite clear the respective responsibilities of the Secretary of State and the NRA. I shall have responsibility to publish a great deal of information and it is to be hoped that the NRA will add to the matters that it is already required to publish. It will be free to supplement that information as it wishes in its annual report. Only where the role of Ministers is less specifically defined is there a case for requiring the NRA's annual report to spell out the fact that the authority has received a ministerial direction. In respect of water quality objectives, the Bill makes Ministers' role absolutely explicit. The House will not therefore wish to accept the Opposition's amendment.

4.45 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Does the Secretary of State agree that there is a problem of over-abstraction in chalk streams, rivers and waterways throughout the country? Many feel that the Lords amendment is missing a requirement on the NRA to report on abstraction licences and the control of water abstraction. Does not the right hon. Gentleman agree that that should be dealt with? Can he give us assurances that that question will be considered in relation to the NRA's report?

Mr. Ridley: I am sure that that is an important matter, and I agree that it should be made public. I see no reason why the NRA would not want to make it public. If hon. Members wrote to the NRA, no doubt the body would give them a full explanation of the situation in their area. There is no secrecy involved; we are talking not about the freedom and flexibility that we give the NRA but about the duties we place upon it.

Hon. Members may know that we have included in the Bill a power for the NRA to borrow in cases of emergency —for example, when serious flooding or erosion of the sea wall requires extra special work in a short period and extra special cost beyond what it is reasonable to precept on the local authorities in one year. The NRA's finance will be from Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food grant and precepts on the local authority for flood protection and sea defence. To the extent that the NRA might be involved in capital works, the necessary powers already exist in the Bill. In the normal course of replacing flood defences and sea walls, however, the NRA will have a programme for which it can precept annually and will not, therefore, need to borrow. I do not believe that there is a problem.

The gross error of thinking revealed by the hon. Member for Bootle was that the NRA would become an environmental investor. After listening for 200 hours to our debates on the Bill, the hon. Gentleman made a classic mistake. He said that we were removing from the water companies the non-commercial operations so that the companies would become more profitable. We are not doing that at all. We are removing the regulatory function from the water companies, so that the NRA can discharge its responsibilities to the House and the public, and control standards. The investment in environmental improvements—in drinking water, treatment plants, sewage treatment plants, new pipes and so on—which are the major investments, will be undertaken by the companies. The NRA will set the standards that the companies must reach by a certain period, monitor their activities and enforce standards if the companies do not reach them of their own accord. Nowhere in that model system of regulation is there a need for the NRA to invest in works of environmental improvement—except in flood defences and sea protection. So the hon. Member for Bootle has it wrong.

The more that the Opposition and the hon. Member for Bootle continue to damn, inaccurately and misleadingly, the present water environment—I admit that there are blemishes, although nothing like to the extent that the hon. Gentleman says—the more they make the case for the Bill and the case for separating the functions of regulation and investment to achieve the required standards. The hon. Gentleman has never been able to get it right whether he is opposing the Bill because the water industry is in a fine state under public ownership, or whether he is speaking in favour of the Bill because the water environment is in a mess.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor asked whether the National Rivers Authority would have the necessary funding to carry out its operations. I have given the answer many times before, as is true of all the arguments on the Bill. The sources of the NRA's funding for flood defence are local authority precepts and grants from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. That is separate from any other of its activities and in no

[Mr. Ridley]

sense will the Government influence what it decides it wants to do on precepts. It will have borrowing powers in relation to that.

The authority's water resources functions, which are the important river basin management functions, will be funded entirely from charges on abstractions including the new water plcs, and there will be a new charge in accordance with the principle, to which I think that the hon. Member for Bootle subscribes, that the polluter pays. The dischargers—the water plcs in relation to sewage and the industrialists in relation to industrial waste—will contribute towards the cost of pollution control through a charge for discharge consents.

Mr. Alton: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ridley: No, because I have nearly finished.

The remaining quarter of NRA expenditure, which on present figures will be about £70 million, will be met by Exchequer grant. There is no question of starving the authority. The Government accept the argument of the House that it is necessary to fund the NRA properly so that it can discharge its important functions fully and properly.

If we are to fund it in that way, as we must, the House, especially through the Select Committee on Public Accounts, will rightly insist that we ensure that the £70 million is spent properly on the functions for which the NRA is designed. As is the case with all public servants, we must ensure that the funds are not used for profligate over-spending on the salaries and expenses of members of staff. There must be proper accountability to the House, just as there is for the staff of the House of Commons, for the staff of my own Department and for the staff of all nationalised industries. There must be proper accountability for public money.

I repeat that the worry the Opposition have tried to instill in the public—although they concede that the NRA is highly necessary and long overdue—that we are trying to muck the NRA for a ha'porth of tar is typical of the hon. Member for Bootle and his hon. Friends. So deep is their ignorance and antipathy that they can never bring themselves to admit for once that the Government have got it right. On this occasion, they have.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): If the Secretary of State believes for one moment that the Government have got it right on the functions of the NRA he shows, once again, how mistaken he is. The Opposition have repeatedly made it clear that we support the establishment of the NRA. However, we are most concerned that it should have the necessary funding and powers to carry out its duties satifactorily. I am sure that at least the hon. Members for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) and for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) agree with that point, as do those whose concerns they were expressing.

We believe that the regulatory function should be separate from investment. The Secretary of State said earlier that we did not agree with that principle, but he was wrong. We agree that the gamekeeper and poacher aspects should be separate and, therefore, that the regulatory and investment functions should be separate. But there is no reason why that cannot be done with the industry left in the public sector and with investment made by the public sector to deal with the problems facing the water industry. The problems, whether river pollution, sewage treatment works, water quality or river quality, could and should be solved in the public sector.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) referred in an intervention to a problem that we are unable to discuss today—over-abstraction. He will recognise that, because of the very nature of our debates yesterday and today, and the imposition of a guillotine, there are many important issues that we shall be unable to debate at all, including the most important aspect of the Bill—the regulatory authority—to which this House and the public look to ensure a proper quality of supplies and sewage treatment in future. We are unable to debate that sufficiently because the Government have seen fit to impose a guillotine and have provided insufficient time for that aspect of the Bill to be debated properly. The Secretary of State—

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pike: No, because I have only four minutes in which to speak.

The Secretary of State is well aware that, in its third report, the Select Committee on the Environment, when proposing that the gamekeeper and poacher functions should be separate, said:

> "It would give us cause for very real alarm if the present water pollution inspectorate (or a new unified and independent regulatory body)—

that is, the National Rivers Authority—

> "were not given adequate staffing, resources and the necessary powers to oversee the activities of a privatised water industry."

That is the position that we have now reached. We are establishing an independent body, the National Rivers Authority, but we are not giving it the powers, the functions or the ability to be seen openly to carry out its functions to the satisfaction of the public. I stress the word "public". It is not only the Government and the House but the public who have a right to be satisfied that these matters are being dealt with properly.

I received today a letter from the Prime Minister's office, which said:

> "An independent regulator is being given legislative teeth to impose high standards in the public interest."

Clearly, the Prime Minister herself does not know that the Government are removing the teeth from the National Rivers Authority and ensuring that it cannot carry out its functions.

The hon. Member for Macclesfield said that if the National Rivers Authority is unable to offer the salaries to attract the right staff, that will weaken its basis from the start. In addition, the concession that the authority cannot take action against the water companies as a result of what has happened in the interim period is an outrage and shows the direction in which the Government intend to go.

There is a danger that, once the industry is in the private sector, profit will become more important than dealing with pollution and ensuring that we have a satisfactory quality of supply. The Government are dedicated above all to profit and pay only lip-service to green issues. They have put a veneer on the Bill and pretend that it is a green Bill. They will allow relaxation after relaxation to ensure that the privatised industry can make the profits they want it to make to attract people to invest in it.

I have a letter from North West Water which says:

"The input of these pollutional loads to the River Brun and hence to Rowley Lake is now considered unacceptable". The discharge of treated sewage effluent from Worsthorne sewage treatment works does not comply with the conditions of consent. However, action cannot be taken against those polluters because of the power to exclude the present one-year moratorium. The letter continues:

"There is also a storm sewage overflow upstream of the sewage works which does and is designed to release the flow of sewage arriving at the works in extreme weather conditions."

Those are the problems facing the industry. Hon. Member after hon. Member could itemise the different sewage works which do not meet the consent levels but which will be allowed to get away with it.

The Government are not really in favour of ensuring that the National Rivers Authority can carry out its functions. Although the principle may be right, the Government are not giving the NRA the teeth, the staffing or the resources to carry out its functions properly. However, they are not prepared to be seen to be doing that in the open. Once again, the Government will fail to ensure that our water quality is brought up to standard, even though the public are entitled to that. I hope that the amendment will be carried.

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 197, Noes 302.

Division No. 276] **[5.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Adley, Robert
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*

Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Lords amendment No. 155 agreed to.

It being after Five o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to order [3 July], to put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Lords amendments Nos. 117 to 154, 156 to 237, 267 and 277 agreed to.—[Some with Special Entry.]

Schedule 18

POWERS WITH RESPECT TO THE LAYING AND MAINTENANCE OF PIPES ETC.

Lords amendment: No. 238, in page 267, line 13, leave out from "description;" to end of line 15 and insert—

"(ii) the power conferred by virtue of sub-paragraph (1)(bb) above; and

(iii) each of the powers conferred in relation to the powers mentioned in sub-paragraphs (i) and (ii) above by virtue of sub-paragraph (1)(c) above,"

The Minister for Water and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendment No. 239 and the Government motion to disagree, together with Government amendments (a), (b) and (c) in lieu thereof, Lords amendment No. 240 and the Government motion to disagree with the amendment.

Mr. Howard: Schedule 18 sets out the powers under which the authority and water and sewerage undertakers are able to lay and repair pipes and carry out associated works. They are generally able to exercise their pipe-laying powers after serving reasonable notice on the owner and occupier of the land.

The purpose of amendments Nos. 239 and 240 is to require the authority and undertakers generally to seek the consent of the owner and occupier of the land before exercising the powers. The power to lay pipes after serving reasonable notice would be limited to cases of emergency, cases where the undertaker is complying with a requisition to provide a main or sewer and cases where the Secretary of State determines that it would be exceptionally difficult to obtain the consent of every owner and occupier concerned.

The overall effect of those amendments would be severely to inhibit the ability of undertakers to meet effectively the requirements placed on them to provide the water and sewerage services that are essential to public health.

While there may seem to be a superficial reasonableness about the amendments, in practice they would impose extremely cumbersome arrangements on the Secretary of State and undertakers, which would to a large extent defeat the whole object of the pipe-laying powers. Far from merely limiting those powers in a sensible way, the amendments would in fact undermine them.

It is self-evident that imposing a requirement to obtain the consent of every landowner and every occupier will cause delay. Whether it is a case involving many landowners and occupiers along the route or only a few, negotiations can be protracted as each person affected attempts to persuade the undertaker to go elsewhere, to delay entry or to give greater compensation or some other advantage over everyone else. Where negotiations break down, the amendments provide for the Secretary of State to determine whether consent is being unreasonably withheld. That would be a quasi-judicial process which is bound to take some months to determine, particularly if the person withholding the consent does not co-operate with the process or if local inquiries are involved.

The amendments provide for some exceptions. They provide for the Secretary of State to be able to determine whether it would be exceptionally difficult to obtain within a reasonable time the consent of every owner and occupier concerned. But that would be a very difficult jurisdiction for the Secretary of State to exercise. There would have to be strong evidence that an attempt to use the normal consent procedure would involve exceptional difficulty beyond the normal length of those protracted processes. The Secretary of State would need to consider representations from the parties involved, perhaps to take independent advice or even to hold a local inquiry. There would then of course be the possibility of further delay by dissatisfied parties seeking to challenge the Secretary of State's decision by way of judicial review.

5.15 pm

The amendments are particularly unreasonable when considered in the context of our European Community obligations. On the one hand, Opposition Members urge us to comply with those obligations, in particular the drinking water directive, to an impracticable time scale, while on the other they support moves to remove from the Bill the very powers that water and sewerage undertakers will need to meet those commitments. If the operational capabilities of water and sewerage undertakers are constrained in the way proposed by the amendments, there is certain to be a considerable deterioration in the pace at which we can expect to see the improvements that we all want in the quality of our drinking water and standards of our bathing beaches.

I know that in retaining the existing powers of water authorities to lay pipes on notice, we would be preserving the unique position of the water industry as the only public utility with such powers. The water industry can, however, properly be regarded in a different context from other utilities. Satisfactory water supply and sewerage arrangements are essential to public health. The undertakers need those powers to be able to carry out the major improvement programmes necessary to meet the European Community requirements on public water supplies and to ensure the improvement in the cleanliness of our beaches—matters which we are constantly told should be taken forward more rapidly. The water industry does not generally have the operational advantages of other utilities. The route of water and sewer pipes is often determined by the need for gravitational flows, which is a restriction that does not apply elsewhere.

I appreciate that some landowners are dissatisfied with the levels of compensation paid in those cases. The Bill provides for full and fair compensation to be paid in cases where the value of the land is depreciated or loss or damage is caused as a result of the exercise of pipe-laying powers. The grounds on which compensation is paid following the exercise of those powers are being brought into line with the compensation provisions which apply to other utilities. Landowners affected by the exercise of those powers by the water industry will therefore be able to claim compensation on the same grounds as those affected by similar operations of other utilities. The Bill also provides for disputes over the amount of compensation to be referred to the Lands Tribunal.

I am well aware of the scope that those powers offer for arbitrary behaviour on the part of undertakers. I know that there have been occasions in the past when landowners have suffered from unreasonable actions. It is for those reasons that we have taken significant steps to protect the interests of landowners.

First, the Bill provides for the powers to be subject to a statutory code of practice to be submitted by the undertakers to the Secretary of State for approval. Unlike the voluntary codes which exist in some water authorities, the codes will be mandatory and the powers will be subject to the oversight of the director general. The Department has produced a model code, on which the statutory codes will be based, in consultation with the water industry and landowning interests. The code will cover all aspects of the pipe-laying process. In particular, it will contain

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provisions requiring undertakers to provide information to owners and occupiers about the works, to plan the works to cause the minimum inconvenience to landowners and to restore the land, once the work is complete, to its original condition. Undertakers will be required to act in a reasonable way at all times. I believe the model code strikes the right balance between the need to ensure that landowning interests are protected and the reasonable needs of undertakers.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Does the model code cover interest on outstanding loans in compensation claims?

Mr. Howard: In the Bill we do not propose any change to the existing arrangements relating to interest. My hon. Friend will be aware that we have separately issued a consultation document that deals with the payment of interest on compensation in compulsory purchase cases. We shall be announcing the results of that compensation exercise in due course.

The second step we have taken is to provide in clause 156 for the director general to direct an undertaker to make a payment to the complainant, up to a maximum of £1,000—which we propose should be increased to £5,000—if he is satisfied that an undertaker has failed to consult the owner and occupier before or during pipe-laying, or by acting unreasonably has caused them to suffer loss or damage or to be inconvenienced. This provision will help to ensure that undertakers act reasonably when exercising their powers.

Finally, my noble Friend the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside introduced in the other place a new requirement on undertakers. Lords amendment No. 161 requires undertakers to alter or remove a pipe in response to a reasonable request from a person with an interest in the land where the pipe is installed, or on adjacent land. There will be recourse to the director general in cases where a person considers that an undertaker has refused to comply with a reasonable request to move a pipe. An undertaker will be able to recover from the person the expenses it reasonably incurs in carrying out the works. That will go a long way to ensuring that the presence of undertakers' pipes on private land does not unreasonably hinder any subsequent development of that land.

I know that, in accepting amendments Nos. 238 and 240, the other place was greatly concerned about the powers that will be available to the water industry and the scope they offer for inconsiderate behaviour. The powers are, however, essential for operational, and more importantly public health, reasons. Knowing the strength of feeling on this issue, I have given very serious consideration to the views expressed in both Houses when the issue has been debated. With the leave of the House, I propose to move the amendments on the marshalled list in lieu of Lords amendment No. 239, which will improve still further the protection of the interest of landowners provided in the Bill, while at the same time preserving those essential powers.

The amendments provide that, when exercising their powers in order to lay new pipes, undertakers will be required to give a minimum of three months' notice. A minimum of 42 days notice would be required in the case of replacement or repair of existing pipes. The only exceptions to those arrangements would be cases of emergency and the exercise of the powers in response to a requisition to provide a main or sewer or a request to provide a service pipe when the undertaker is required to comply within a statutory time limit. Those notice periods are intended to ensure that the examples of the exercise of the powers following an unreasonably short period of notice that have concerned Members of both Houses are not repeated.

The amendments also contain a further measure designed to ensure reasonable behaviour by undertakers. It provides for the maximum payment which the director general can direct an undertaker to make to a complainant under clause 156 to be increased from £1,000 to £5,000.

Finally, the amendments provide for the Secretary of State to make regulations to provide for advance payment of compensation in respect of the exercise of the powers. I can give the House an undertaking that the regulations will be made in time to come into force on transfer date. They will follow the precedent of section 52 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 and provide for advance payments of 90 per cent. of the agreed amount of compensation or 90 per cent. of the compensation as estimated by the undertaker. The advance payment will be made not later than three months after such a payment is requested.

The provisions contained in these amendments, together with those in the code of practice, will fully meet the concerns of the other place. The Bill will specify the periods of notice that an undertaker must give before entering land, and the undertaker will be required by the code of practice to provide information to the owner and occupier about the purpose of the works, including the nature, route and timing of works. Those requirements, combined with the provisions in clause 156 for the director general to direct an undertaker to make a payment, now up to £5,000, in cases where the undertaker has failed to consult a complainant or has acted unreasonably in exercising the powers will, I believe, deal extremely effectively with the legitimate concerns of landowners.

The provisions brought forward in these amendments have the agreement of the movers of Lords amendments Nos. 239 and 240 in the other place. I therefore urge hon. Members to disagree with the Lords in amendments 239 and 240. They would not only impose a severe constraint on the ability of undertakers to perform their statutory duties, including those to meet EC obligations, but in putting pressure on undertakers to agree, in effect, ransom payments to landowners would be to the detriment of consumers generally. The House should also disagree with amendment No. 238 since, as a consequence of the amendments we are now moving, it is unnecessary.

I recommend to the House amendments on the marshalled list in lieu of Lords amendment No. 239, which will improve the protection afforded to landowners while preserving the powers of undertakers to meet their statutory obligations. I commend them to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 238 disagreed to.

Lords amendment No. 239 disagreed to.

Clause 156

COMPLAINTS WITH RESPECT TO THE EXERCISE OF WORKS POWERS ON PRIVATE LAND

Amendment made in lieu of Lords amendment No. 239: (a), in page 156, line 26, leave out '£1,000' and insert '£5,000'.

Schedule 18

POWERS WITH RESPECT TO THE LAYING AND MAINTENANCE OF PIPES ETC

Amendment made in lieu of Lords amendment No. 239: (b), in page 267, leave out lines 11 to 20 and insert

'only after reasonable notice of the proposed exercise of the power has been given to the owner and to the occupier of the land where the power is to be exercised.

(5) Subject to sub-paragraph (6) below, in relation to any exercise of the powers conferred by this paragraph for the purpose of laying or altering a relevant pipe, the minimum period that is capable of constituting reasonable notice for the purposes of sub-paragraph (4) above shall be deemed—

(a) where the power is exercised for the purpose of laying a relevant pipe otherwise than in substitution for an existing pipe of the same description, to be three months; and

(b) where the power is exercised for the purpose of altering an existing pipe, to be forty-two days.

(6) Sub-paragraph (5) above shall not apply in the case of any notice given within the period of one year beginning with the transfer date or in the case of any notice given with respect to the exercise of any power in an emergency or for the purpose of—

(a) laying or altering a service pipe; or

(b) complying with a duty imposed under section 40 or 70 of this Act.'.

Amendment made in lieu of Lords amendment No. 239: (c), in page 268, line 38, at end insert—

'( ) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision requiring the Authority or any water undertaker or sewerage undertaker, where it is proposing or has begun to exercise any power conferred by virtue of paragraph 4 or 5 above in a prescribed case, to make advance payments on account of compensation that will become payable in respect of the exercise of that power.'.

Lords amendment No. 240 disagreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 241 to 266, 268 to 276 and 278 to 311 agreed to. [Some with Special Entry.]

Schedule 25

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS AND SAVINGS

Lords amendment: No. 312, in page 351, line 13, leave out sub-paragraph (6).

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: Lords amendments Nos. 317 to 319.

Lords amendment No. 320, in page 356, line 48, at end insert—

"(4) Where the rights and liabilities in respect of any such consent are transferred to a water authority's successor company in accordance with a scheme under Schedule 2 to this Act and the conditions of that consent include one or more of the following, that is to say—

(a) a condition that requires that authority to take samples of any matter discharged;

(b) a condition that requires that authority to furnish any person with information about samples taken by that authority; or

(c) a condition that is contravened where there is a failure by more than a specified number of samples taken by that authority to satisfy specified requirements,

then any such condition as is mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b) above shall cease to have effect on the transfer date and any such condition as is mentioned in paragraph (c) above shall have effect on and after that date as if any samples taken on behalf of the Authority in exercise, at any time on or after that date, of a power conferred by this Act, but no other samples, were the samples falling to be taken into account for the purposes of that condition."

Amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 320, in line 13, leave out from 'in' to end of line 19 and insert

'those paragraphs shall have effect on and after the transfer date in the same manner as before that date, except that any reference to samples taken by that authority shall be taken to mean samples taken by the National Rivers Authority insofar as it refers to samples taken after the transfer date.'.

Lords amendment No. 323.

Mr. Howard: In speaking to Lords amendment No. 320, I shall also deal with the Opposition amendment to it, amendment (a), which we believe should be rejected, for the reasons I shall give in support of Lords amendment No. 320.

Schedule 25 provides the transitional provisions in respect of control of pollution from the current arrangements based on water authority functions and Control of Pollution Act powers to the new arrangements involving the NRA and the new powers in part III, chapter 1 of the Bill.

I shall deal first with Lords amendments Nos. 317 and 318, which provide more flexible arrangements for transfer of consent applications submitted by the water authorities to the Secretary of State from the Secretary of State to the NRA at an appropriate stage.

The general principle of the pollution control transitional arrangements is that discretion should be left with the Secretary of State to decide whether any actions, cases or other matters which if begun after vesting would be for the NRA should, if uncompleted on transfer date, be transferred to that authority.

The basic purpose of the technical amendments is to extend to sewage treatment applications the principles operating elsewhere in the pollution control part of the schedule. The effect will be to allow Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to complete work on particular cases in those circumstances where this seems sensible, particularly where the processing of cases is well advanced.

5.30 pm

In that regard, the Government are particularly anxious that the inspectorate should carry through to completion its determination of the applications for time limited consents to regulate the current position of those works included in the £1 billion improvement programme for the period while the improvements are carried out. If that investment programme is to be completed as soon as practicable, as the Government intend, it is essential to avoid the delay and unnecessary duplication of work that could arise from transferring to the NRA consent applications on which the inspectorate had nearly completed consideration.

The amendment also makes provision for two consequential changes. In the first case, a sub-paragraph provides for the Secretary of State to direct the companies as to the advertising of any applications. The Secretary of State in fact intends that all applications under the programme for dealing with non-compliant works should

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be advertised in view of the public interest they have aroused. However, the inspectorate also has to deal—and will be dealing at transfer date—with large numbers of minor applications, for which advertising in the *London Gazette* might not be appropriate. In exercising the discretion given to him by this amendment, the Secretary of State would expect to follow generally the established guidelines in the annex to the current circular 17/84.

The second feature of the amendment is that the Secretary of State is enabled to direct the authority to provide temporary consent for discharges that are the subject of pending applications both in cases where the Secretary of State passes action to the NRA and in those where it is retained with him. The reason for that is that many of the cases in question will be discovery cases, where the water authority discovers, for instance, a sewage overflow that may not previously have been known, or at least identified as requiring consent.

For those circumstances, under paragraph 5 of schedule 12, the NRA will have power to give consents without application for discharges that cannot realistically be interrupted while applications are being advertised and considered. The provision for directions for temporary consents pending such action is a transitional equivalent of this provision. The provision is doubly necessary because the inspectorate expects to have large numbers of consent applications in respect of minor discharges outstanding at the end of August as a result of the rigorous reviews that the water authorities have been undertaking of their operations, in preparation for privatisation, to ensure that any minor discharges of any sort that could require consent are, in fact, duly covered, so that both the new companies and the NRA can begin their lives on a basis of good order and proper regulation.

Amendments Nos. 319 and 320, taken with amendments Nos. 312 and 323, do two things. First, they amend the terms of existing consents for sewage treatment works discharges to eliminate references to water authorities taking samples of the effluent discharged. It would obviously be inappropriate to apply those to the private sewerage undertakers. After the transfer date, it will be for the NRA to take such samples. Secondly, they put it beyond doubt that, where a works compliance is judged by a programme of samples taken over a relevant period, on and after the transfer date only samples taken by the NRA are to count as a basis for prosecutions of the new companies. In other words, the new bodies and their staff shall not be liable for acts and omissions of their predecessor body.

I need not long delay the House on the first two provisions of the amendments, which simply disapply from consents provisions concerning monitoring and reporting by the water authorities. It is surely self-evident that, with the establishment of the NRA, it would not be appropriate for the undertakers to take their own samples and to report on their performance to the Secretary of State. Consequently, those provisions should go.

The remaining provision deals with circumstances in which compliance with discharge consent standards is assessed over a series of samples taken over a 12-month period, that is, the look-up table system used for control of sewage treatment works discharges for the past four years. Compliance is to be assessed only on the basis of samples taken by the NRA, and therefore the relevant period for assessment of such compliance will begin with the establishment of the NRA and the companies.

Amendments Nos. 312 and 323 establish in the Bill the principle that the new undertakings should not be criminally liable for offences committed by the present water authorities. They simply reflect the principle of criminal case law, established in 1976 in a case heard by the House of Lords, that in the absence of express provision criminal liability does not transfer from one corporate body to another. The amendment changes nothing. In view of the particular concern currently being expressed over criminal liabilities of water authorities, we believe it right, however, that the principle should be clear on the face of the Bill.

However, what we are doing in amendment 323 is nothing new and nothing special. That principle is no more than ordinary justice, securing that the new companies shall not be liable for the actions of a different corporate body going back some 12 months to before legislation to establish the companies was even published.

Mr. Pike: The Minister is dealing with an important point, and it is a considerable variation of what has been said on previous occasions. Can he give us examples from other privatisations, such as gas supply and transport undertakings, where the new bodies have been liable for offences committed by the previous bodies?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman is not entirely correct. If he had listened to my point about the case decided in the House of Lords, he would have realised that it established that criminal liability does not transfer from one corporate entity to another. All that we are doing is putting that principle into the Bill.

Mr. Pike: Is the Minister therefore suggesting that any takeover of one corporate body by another in the City will absolve that body of criminal liability for any offence committed prior to the takeover?

Mr. Howard: Of course not. In such cases, the corporate entity usually remains. It may be owned by different shareholders and it may be part of a new group of companies, but it usually remains. In those circumstances, criminal liability will equally remain. That is entirely different from the position that we are contemplating, which is the creation of an entirely new and different corporate entity.

Mr. Alastair Burt (Bury, North): Opposition Members are missing the point. We are discussing the liability of new companies. It has been suggested that they are immune from prosecution for a year and will not be responsible for their actions. Is it not true that, from day one, any breach of the discharge regulations will be counted against the new company? There will be no incentive to breach the regulations, because ultimately the companies can be prosecuted. We should be concerned about the ability to prosecute the new companies that is retained through the clause and improved by the general benefits that flow from the Bill.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right and I shall shortly explain how the Bill's provisions will have precisely the effect that he identified.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): If it is proved that the water supplied to a certain area has very high aluminium

levels, and if in future there are moves to prosecute the purveyor of water to a community because a causal link is established between aluminum levels and Alzheimer's disease, will there be a let-out for a new company if it claimed that those aluminium levels were the responsibility of the previous water company?

Mr. Howard: Nothing of the sort will happen. The hon. Gentleman will know that the offence of supplying drinking water that is unfit for human consumption is a new offence created by the Bill. We are discussing criminal liability. It will not be possible for the new companies to escape liability on the ground that the cause of any criminal liability should somehow be ascribed to their predecessors.

The only provision made by the clauses and amendments that are now under discussion is the requirement that samples to establish the deficiency of the water concerned must be taken after the new companies exist if they are to find criminal liability in the new companies. The existing companies remain responsible for any samples that are taken which establish any liability on their part. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be assured by that answer to the points that he has raised.

The suggestion that the amendments involve an amnesty is wrong and without foundation. Samples of sewage discharges up to the day of transfer will, as I told the hon. Gentleman, be actionable against the water authority and against the residual water authority maintained in being after transfer. Samples of discharges from the day of transfer will be actionable at the due time against the new company. Not a single sample will be subject to an amnesty. Every one will be actionable against the residual authority or the new company. The so-called amnesty, of which the Opposition make so much, is a figment of their collective imagination.

But what of the variation on that theme—that the principle will, in practice, produce unacceptable results, that the NRA will be crippled at birth, and so on? That argument is also an absurdity, bearing no relationship to the facts, for four reasons.

First, and most important, there will, as I have said, be no immunity in the early stages of the companies' lives. It is quite wrong to suggest that the companies will be able to discharge what they like and get away with it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) has just said, companies will have to comply with the terms of their present conditions from the outset, and failures will go on the public registers. Non-complying samples will clock up against them. They will not be discounted. If the record reveals non-compliance over the sampling period, the NRA will be able to bring prosecutions in respect of breaches of the discharge consents for that period.

Secondly, discharge consents for all works now non-compliant, or at a high risk of non-complying, which are varied for the period during which improvement works are in progress, will in any case include so-called "upper tier" limits, a single breach of which will open the company immediately to the risk of prosecution. As well as being an important environmental safeguard, that will provide the NRA with a new enforcement mechanism for those works.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): The Minister says that the upper tier limit will be another safeguard, but he must be aware of reports that have already come in from people who are to work in the NRA regional offices that they are extremely worried about the level of the upper tier limits which, in some cases, could lead to water of the strength of raw sewage being pumped into our rivers.

Mr. Howard: The levels of the upper tier consents have not yet been determined. We shall take all representations into account in determining them. But that is a far cry from the Opposition's charge in relation to those matters, that there will be a year's so-called amnesty. The hon. Lady is now suggesting that there will not be an amnesty. She is accepting that prosecutions can be brought immediately against the new companies, but she is complaining, in advance of any standards being assessed, about the levels of those upper tier discharge consents.

Mrs. Taylor: I am not suggesting that there will not be an amnesty. I stick by the points that Opposition Members made earlier, on which we shall have time to elaborate shortly. However, the Minister mentioned a specific problem with regard to upper tier limits. Will he confirm that people working in the shadow NRA tell us that limits could be so relaxed that raw sewage could be pumped into our rivers?

Mr. Howard: The limits have not yet been fixed. Anybody can speculate on what might happen if they were at some hypothetical value, but the fact is that they have not been determined. Let me continue to deal with why the Opposition's charge is completely bogus.

Thirdly, in the case of all the other works with no history of non-compliance, it is unlikely that samples taken by the water authority before the transfer date would have any significance for prosecution purposes. It is true that the NRA would need to take samples over a 12-month period before bringing a prosecution, but it is the position now that compliance for sewage treatment works is assessed retrospectively over a 12-month period. That is not new. As hon. Members may know, it was introduced in 1985, following research by the water research centre, and reflects the volatility of sewage effluents and the 95 per cent. basis on which standards are set.

In practical terms, we must remember that prosecution is a tool of last resort. While this will be a matter for the NRA, early evidence of possible non-compliance is likely to be a trigger for investigations and discussions with the discharger. The NRA, under its normal enforcement policy, would want to go through a number of stages, including warnings, before contemplating prosecution.

5.45 pm

Finally, the Secretary of State is enabled under paragraph 6 of schedule 12 to direct the NRA at any time to revoke or vary consents where it appears to him appropriate to do so for the protection of public health or flora or fauna. In the event that the NRA is seriously concerned about a particular discharge and about constraints within the consent on its ability to take enforcement action, it could draw the case to the attention of the Secretary of State. It would be open to him to direct the authority to revoke or vary the consent, perhaps by imposition of an upper tier limit whose breach made possible immediate enforcement action.

For those four reasons, any argument that the NRA will be significantly impeded in its enforcement role by the terms of these amendments is wholly without foundation. The amendments ensure that we follow a fair and proper

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course. It is a course that holds no risks for the NRA, for pollution control or for its effective enforcement. Above all, the amendments ensure that the new companies—the result of a massive reorganisation and restructuring of the water industry—are criminally liable only for those actions for which they were actually responsible. The House should surely accept that as the fair and relevant principle on which to approach those matters.

I apologise for delaying the House so long with explanations, but it is clearly right that I should dispel the misunderstandings and misrepresentations of recent days.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): River water quality has been declining in recent years. In addition to industrial discharges, the main cause of that deterioration is the direct discharge of untreated sewage effluent. It is that with which the amendments deal and about which we are concerned.

Sewage degrades more rivers than any other pollutants. To what extent, if at all, will the Government succeed in their stated intention of cleaning up the rivers? The Opposition do not believe that they will. They cannot. Despite what the Minister has just said, the Lords amendment to schedule 25 would protect the plcs from the consequences of criminal actions, based on the quality of sewage effluence, before flotation. The fines that people are having to pay are worth almost nothing. The Opposition would much rather concentrate on a preventive approach in the cleaning up of sewage treatment works.

Where is the even-handedness in the Government's approach? Why do the Government argue that water plcs are different from other privatised industries? Why are the arrangements different from those that were made when the old Greater London council's responsibilities and liabilities were transferred to the residuary bodies? Why is water different?

Even the Minister must accept that the amendment is hurried. It has been introduced at the last stage when the going is getting even tougher for the Government. If, as the Minister says, the legal position is clear, why did he have to table the amendment in the first place? Is not that a further reason against privatisation? This hurried amendment will make look-up tables and consent standards start from scratch on day one after vesting. Compliance with sewage discharge consents will be assessed over a 12-month period by reference to a look-up table of specific parameters. Sewage works will have to comply with the consent conditions in the look-up table for 95 per cent. of the time. Therefore, a prosecution can be based only on post-vesting samples. No prosecutions will be possible until at least 12 months after privatisation.

It is no answer for the hon. and learned Gentleman to argue that the amendment is of a transitional nature and that the staff and the plcs should not be liable for the acts and omissions of their predecessors. If the Lords amendments relate simply to a transitional measure, why was it not in the Bill all along? If the samples clocked up over the past year are to have no legal backing after privatisation, what will be the implications for the National Rivers Authority and for private prosecutions? How can the Minister justify the NRA being powerless to prosecute for a whole year while rivers continue to be polluted? How does the Minister propose to deal with pending cases? Why have the Government not found a fairer way of introducing transitional provisions?

The Government are compromising on the environment, as they did through all the stages of the Bill. Why are the Government compromising on public health and the basis of the NRA? The amendments are aimed at achieving those compromises.

What does the Minister have to say about the comments of one of his noble Friends, who is a member of the NRA committee, to the effect that the water companies were being given a 12-month, prosecution-free holiday, and that the Government are ditching environmentalists to save the sell-off? How will the NRA and its future staff feel about that? How will it be able to fulfil its role as the much-acclaimed preventer of pollution? We do not believe that it can fulfil that role effectively.

It would be bad enough if the undertakers were not at risk of prosecution only for the first 12 months after the sell-off, but when amendment No. 312 is placed in the context of all the other changes made to sewage discharge consents, there is a case for real public concern.

The Government invited applications for interim consents. The Minister defends one year of immunity by introducing an upper tier value for the first time. Why, at the start of the debate, was the Minister unable to tell the House what that upper limit will be? Why, in the final stages of the debate, have we not been given any idea of that upper limit? Will it be five times as high as the average effluent level, as we understand the plcs want it to be, or twice as high, as the NRA wants? Will it be three times as high, as the Government have suggested that it could be? Rather than trying to defend immunity from prosecution, the Minister should reveal what the upper limit will be.

Why are the Government rushing through applications for the relaxation of consents standards for sewage treatment works? That is happening in the Severn-Trent area and in others throughout the country. Is it true that, although approximately 842 applications have been received for interim time-limited relaxations, a proportion of the remainder are for long-term relaxations of numerical consents standards that will not be time-limited? What about the third category of applications for changing from numerical to descriptive consents standards? If the Secretary of State and the Minister for Water and Planning are as concerned about controlling pollution as they would have us believe, why have they waived the advertising requirement for descriptive consents? We believe that that is at the heart of the matter, and at the centre of the deception inherent in all of the amendments.

In a letter to Friends of the Earth dated 2 June, the Department of the Environment stated that there will be no relaxation of pollution control standards, yet applications for such relaxations have been invited, submitted and rushed through. The chance of improving river quality becomes even more remote, particularly when one considers the further damaging effects of the Government's reponse to applications to relax consents standards. The Government claim that such relaxations will merely regularise the position, to ensure that they are consistent with the current quality of effluent. The Government's definition of "current" is so shabby that there is no real hope of improving standards, which makes the Bill doubly iniquitous.

Even more dangerous is the Government's attitude to the general duty in section 1 of the Water Act 1973 which

requires Ministers jointly to promote a national water policy involving the maintenance and restoration—I stress the word "restoration"—of the wholesomeness of water. How can the hon. and learned Gentleman think of relaxing standards when there is a general duty on Ministers to maintain and to restore them? What has happened to that duty? Clearly the Government will be challenged, and my right hon. and hon. Friends will work with the general public and with environmental groups throughout the country to ensure that every consent application is challenged.

We do not believe that the equivalent of raw sewage should be discharged into Britain's rivers. The Government will face challenges in the courts as soon as standards are relaxed. If the Government care so much about improving standards, why did they repeal section 1 of the Water Act 1973—the very legislation that made a general commitment to improve water quality? Why is there no general duty to restore and maintain the quality of controlled water? What happened to the commitment entered into in July 1987 to set statutory quality objectives for rivers? Why will they not be set until 1992, as was stated in a letter to the water authorities that was sent out last year?

The United Kingdom is a signatory to directives aimed at setting legally binding standards of river quality. Will the Minister give an assurance that, when determining the 1,070 or more applications, he will in every case discharge the United Kingdom's obligation to prevent pollution by dangerous substances and to achieve compliance with the relevant environmental quality objectives that the directives specify?

Here we are, in the final throes of the debate about water privatisation—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Conservative Members may shout, "Hear, hear", but whatever we may be told about improving standards and dealing with pollution, my right hon. and hon. Friends and I know that the Lords amendments are designed only to deal with the legacy of the Government's failure to invest public money in the infrastructure.

Why should we believe that the group of amendments before the House will achieve improved standards, as the Minister says? The general public cannot be fooled. In a recent poll commissioned by *The Observer*, only 2 per cent. of the sample rated the Government's record of pollution control as very good. Until the Lords amendments are on the statute book, and if our amendment is not carried, not even 2 per cent. of the population will rate the Government's record on pollution control as very good. Far from coming to an end—I say this for the benefit of those hon. Members who shouted "Hear, hear"—the pollution debate and others concerning our water supplies, sewage discharge consents and the totally unacceptable 12-month immunity from prosecution have only just begun.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Provided that the right of action against the authorities in respect of pollution does not disappear, surely the bodies that will replace the authorities, and all their employees, should be liable in respect of the pollution that the new bodies cause? Is that not fair?

6 pm

Ms. Walley: The hon. Gentleman fails to understand that this is not a realistic way of viewing the problem, and that what he suggests is merely a token method of dealing with it.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): If the Government's proposal is such an obviously good idea as they now claim, why did no one think of it in Committee? Why did not the Minister suggest it during those 200 hours of debate?

Ms. Walley: As always, my hon. Friend has made a very apt point. The Government did not see fit to present the measure during the many hours of debate in Committee; they have had to introduce it in the final stages as a bribe to enable the sell-off to go ahead, because they know—as the public know—that they are in serious difficulties with their water privatisation programme.

Opposition Members know that the debate is only just beginning. Men, women and children—I do not think that the Government understand how important this is to women and children, who are as informed as ever about the state of the environment—know and care enough to ensure that the debate continues. The Opposition, together with environmental and conservation groups, will make certain that the issue stays at the heart of the continuing controversy about this immoral water privatisation legislation.

Mr. Livsey: The Lords amendments are a national scandal. The new water undertakers will be exempted from criminal liability for their discharges, and liability will not be transferred to another corporate body. Freedom of prosecution is to be extended for at least 12 months, and, according to some people's reckoning, for 18 months. Water authorities are now polluting and getting away with it, a state of affairs that will continue under a private monopoly. That breaches what is surely one of the prime environmental principles—that the polluters must pay.

The amendments will cripple the pollution inspectorate. In exposing the callousness of the Government's attitude to the environment and, indeed, to public health, they rumble the Government's privatisation programme. Their aim, however, is to rescue the Government from the hole into which they have dug themselves. If the plcs are to go free from prosecution, the flotation will not be jeopardised. That is what it is all about.

In the past year, 1,000 sewage works in England and Wales broke consent standards. The water authorities cannot sign flotation prospectuses while they are persistently committing criminal offences, so the transfer will be impossible until they are free from prosecution. So many sewage works are breaking the law—20 per cent. at present—that the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office will not be able to get through all the paperwork by November, when the arrangements must be tied up.

On 12 June I asked the Secretary of State for Wales to list the number of sewage works in Wales that were failing established effluent pollution standards. The Under-Secretary provided a list of 102 treatment works that had failed to meet consent standards during 1988, from Presteigne in my constituency to Weston Beggard on the Herefordshire border, and including many other instances throughout the Welsh water authority area.

[Mr. Livsey]

This is a huge problem, and it is no wonder that the Government are trying to get themselves off the hook. According to yesteday's *Western Mail*, they are asking for immunity for 124 Welsh sewage works, so the position has deteriorated since 1988. In 1987-88 there were 20,000 breaches of pollution standards in rivers in England and Wales. Only 1 per cent. of offenders were prosecuted, and in only one instance was the maximum fine of £2,000 imposed. That is, in any event, a trivial fine; we should not forget that pollution also affects drinking water quality.

Any pretensions to commitment on green issues on the part of the Government are a sham, and the Lords amendment proves it. On Monday morning, I stood on the banks of the River Tawe in the Swansea valley with members of the Tawe angling society, discussing the Welsh water authority's application—as shown in the *Western Mail* on 22 June—to increase discharges from the Ystradgynlais sewage works. We tried to calculate the number of cubic metres of effluent that would be discharged into the river, and the likely effect on the fishery. If we were to stand there in 12 months' time, we decided, there would probably be no fishery, and no fish in the river for the angling society's members.

Mr. Howard: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not trying deliberately to mislead his constituents or anyone else. He must appreciate that the effect of the water authority's application in respect of its sewage treatment works at Ystradgynlais—as with other treatment works elsewhere—will be to regularise the existing position, not to allow more sewage to be discharged into the river. The works does not comply with the consent standard at present. Works will be put in hand to enable it to meet that standard, and during the interim period the authority should be allowed not to discharge more sewage than it does now, but to continue the discharge at the present level. Does the hon. Gentleman not understand that? Will he stop misleading his constituents and the House?

Mr. Livsey: The Minister knows perfectly well that the discharges into the River Tawe are unacceptable, and the position will not be improved by the transfer of the discharge to a private monopoly which will go scot-free for the next 12 months. That is scandalous. Surely it would be far better if the treatment works, and a thousand like it, were put right before privatisation.

Mr. Howard: How does the hon. Gentleman suggest that the sewage works at Ystradgynlais can be put magically into a condition that complies with its existing discharge content? Will he wave a magic wand? He must appreciate that it will take time for the work to be carried out, and that while it is being carried out, it makes sense for the authority not to be prosecuted if the improvements that he and I want are to be put into place.

Mr. Livsey: The Minister clearly accepts that there is no reason to privatise the industry. I rest my case.

Mr. Burt: I rise to support this series of amendments and to express surprise at the extraordinary amount of sanctimonious humbug that has come from Opposition Members. One might have got the impression from their remarks that they had been friends of the environment from day one—that when Labour Members were in sole office, or when they held power during the Lib-Lab pact, their record on investment and the control of pollution had been so good that they could lecture us all about what they had achieved. In fact, an enormous burden of guilt rests on Labour Members, and that has coloured the way in which they approach the amendments that we are discussing, but I will come to that shortly.

I accept what has been said about basic natural justice in this case—*[Interruption.]* While that point has merit, it is more important for Opposition Members, who I see grinning, to accept that the greatest sanction against the new companies does not lie simply in the fact of prosecution. It lies in the fact that the threat of prosecution begins on day one. If there had been a suggestion that prosecution procedures could not start on day one—because of some delay relating sampling to the process of law—hon. Members in all parts of the House would have expressed concern, for we are all concerned about pollution and the environment and feel strongly about the need for the problems to be tackled.

The important points are that the prosecution process can begin on day one and that the new companies will have no immunity. I cannot believe that the new companies will have any vested interest in fooling about with the discharges that they make right from the start simply because prosecution may be some way off. The threat, the sanction, against the new companies is clear and straightforward.

Opposition Members have overdone the immunity point by trying to suggest that the control of pollution will be drastically affected for the worse. Again, they have failed to stress that prosecution of existing authorities goes right up to the last possible day and that the process of prosecution of the new companies can start the day after. They have also failed to concentrate sufficiently on the importance of the upper tier of protection, which is new and which the Government have introduced. That can allow the new rivers authority to act immediately there has been a breach. That protection does not exist at present. It did not exist when Labour Members were in office and had control of the extent of river pollution. It is an additional, significant new power and it will work.

I return to the principal question of guilt which has coloured the action of Opposition Members in this House and in the other place. When the Conservatives came to office, we were faced with the task of clearing out the Augean stables of effluent left by years of neglect by Labour Members. They failed to implement the Control of Pollution Act 1974, although they now claim to have a good record on its implementation. Their failure to implement that Act prevented the public from bringing prosecutions.

Mr. Morley: I do not want to prolong the debate by delaying the hon. Gentleman's remarks because I am anxious that we concentrate on the main issue. If matters have been so wonderful under the Conservatives, may I ask the hon. Gentleman to explain why—when river and water quality standards generally improved under the last Labour Government and before then—for the first time almost since the second world war, in the last 10 years, under Conservative rule, river water quality has been deteriorating? In my area, the local river has deteriorated for the fourth successive year, after progressive improvements.

6.15 pm

Mr. Burt: I gave way to the hon. Gentleman hoping that he would admit some burden of guilt of his party for the failures of the past. He failed to point out that 95 per cent. of our rivers are in good or fair condition, which places us equal top of the European Community league. The failure in the past to invest has undoubtedly caused distress to his constituents now, but as he bears no shame or repentance for that, I must move on.

The economic failure in the past which caused the lack of investment is inherently part of the Opposition's case today. In the other place, Lady Platt said that failure to invest had been a boost for the polluter. I agree, and only as a result of the Bill are we really tackling that legacy of pollution.

Secrecy clouded our perception in the past of the efficiency of sewage treatment works. We have cast that secrecy aside, knowing that it is more important to be open about the way in which treatment plants work so that the public may know exactly what is happening. Public pressure to improve—that is very much part of the Bill—will lead to better standards in future.

There is a marked contrast between the two sides of the House about the way in which pollution has been and is being tackled. Our implementation of the Control of Pollution Act, the return of investment to deal with sewage treatment and getting rid of secrecy has resulted in considerable improvements being achieved in recent years, and those improvements will continue. About 80 per cent. of Britain's sewage works are meeting the control of pollution standards. Although that is a good record, we must do better.

The new provisions have been misinterpreted by Opposition Members as immunity from prosecution, which they are not. They have been misinterpreted largely because Labour Members bear such a burden of guilt for the way in which pollution was handled when they were in government, compared with the length of time it has taken us, with the improving economy, to tackle the issue. The Bill will help further improvements to be made.

The amendments represent a further example of how we will be tackling pollution in future and how the new companies will be under pressure from the start. The upper tier provisions will represent a guarantee against pollution. Such a guarantee has not existed previously. I congratulate the Government on introducing this series of amendments.

Dr. Kim Howells: We on the Labour Benches have been hoping for too much. We hoped that the new green shawl which the Government have pulled over their shoulders would be an improvement on the usual threadbare variety that they have worn in the past.

Let us be clear that this series of amendments is designed solely to facilitate the birth of the new plcs. As has been made clear, they cannot be born without amendments such as these because they will not be able to operate sewage works until they have signed the flotation prospectus. They cannot do that if they are persistently committing criminal offences.

We are not conducting an abstract political debate. I am willing to admit that river quality has improved. The problem is that the improvements usually occur in the upper rivers. The rivers flow through open countryside before reaching towns and sewage treatment works. I cite the most famous of all Welsh rivers—the one after which we are named—the Taff. It flows right in front of my front door. The Taff is a beautiful river until it reaches the first of the Welsh water authority's sewage treatment plants. From there on down the valley it is a disgrace. The river banks are festooned with the most unsightly rubbish, most of which has come from discharges from sewage plants during periods of high rainfall.

I do not know whether other hon. Members live near such rivers. Everybody living in the valleys of south Wales cannot ignore the rivers, because they live so close by them. We see them every day. It may be possible in other areas to ignore the filth that is put into the rivers. That cannot easily be done in south Wales.

I take up the Minister's challenge to talk about the existing position because what I have described is the existing position. Walking anywhere along the lower Taff one sees small islands of sewage drifting down the river. They threaten to turn the wonderful new Cardiff Bay development corporation barrage into the smelliest dockside development anywhere in western Europe. It is a disgrace and we should not have to live with it.

As the Minister for Water and Planning said, the new plcs will not be equipped with magic wands that will clean up the rivers on vesting day. They will inherit the present appalling sewage discharges into our rivers. The amendments do not address the immediate problem, which is to spend capital on sewage treatment plants so that we comply as quickly as possible with the European Community's minimum standards. That is not the central purpose of the amendments. They provide for a honeymoon period during which the new companies will be able to make investment decisions which may or may not boost their profits. Hard decisions will not have to be made during that period about cleaning up their act. The decisions that the new companies make will be designed primarily to improve profits as soon as possible.

My claim, and that of many others in my constituency and of people throughout Wales who live close to rivers and who have witnessed the deterioration of our rivers as a result of sewage discharges every single day, is that the amendments will do nothing to improve the position.

Mr. Leigh: I wish that all 55 million members of the public could have witnessed the Committee proceedings and also these proceedings. Then they could have compared the logic of the Minister of Water and Planning's case with the anecdotal prejudice of Opposition Members, which has been revealed very clearly in this debate.

There are four very good reasons why the Opposition amendment should not be agreed to. These reasons would stand up in any court of law or in front of any objective assembly. First, from day one the private water companies will be responsible for any breaches of discharge consents. Secondly, we are establishing upper tier limits that have never been established before. Thirdly, under paragraph 6 of schedule 12 the National Rivers Authority will be empowered to take immediate enforcement action against any company that breaches the discharge consents. Fourthly, it will be a breach of natural justice, as is well understood under our legal system, for a new company to be made responsible for the faults of its predecessors. Those are four good reasons why the amendment is incomprehensible. What a pity that the public could not have heard my hon. and learned Friend say just that.

[Mr. Leigh]

We have had nearly 200 hours of debate. We are in the closing moments of what should have been the flagship of the Labour party's opposition to this Government—the flagship that would take the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) into the shadow cabinet. What was she reduced to in the closing moments of the debate? What bright new ideas did she put forward? She was reduced to talking about transitional arrangements for sewage. She could not even get her case together very well. In time, members of the public will compare the position next year and the year after that with the position a few years ago.

Yesterday I asked five questions at the beginning of our debate about the Labour Government's record. I asked whether they had implemented part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and the bathing beaches directive. Once again the hon. Member for Dewsbury is looking down at her notes. I shall be happy to give way to her. I referred to the secrecy at that time and to the prohibition of prosecutions by members of the public. *[Interruption.]* I do not know what the hon. Lady is mumbling under her breath, but she cannot answer these questions.

Members of the public will compare what happened 10 years ago with what will happen in a few years time. For the first time, an environmental protection agency—I do not know what the hon. Lady is drawing from her handbag. Perhaps she could explain why the level of investment under the last Labour Government was going down, whereas now it is going up. In a few years, members of the public will see the establishment of a strong National Rivers Authority that is capable of looking after our environment. They will also see that powerful companies will be able for the first time to invest in the infrastructure. That investment has always been denied to the water industry. That is the truth and those are the facts. What a pity that every member of the public could not hear the debates.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): As we move into the last half hour of our seven months of deliberations on the Water Bill, it is extraordinary that the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) should still be trying to convince himself that there is some political merit in the Bill. I, too, wish that members of the public had been able to hear the months of deliberation in Committee. If the hon. Gentleman's four questions could have been so simply answered, why did the Government not table an amendment in Committee so that the issues could be properly debated then? Instead, they tried to sneak in a proposal on a Friday afternoon in the other place, thus denying the Opposition the opportunity to table an amendment to it. The Government knew that they were in trouble and that they had to sneak in this polluters' charter, this polluters' paradise, to ensure that flotation will have a modicum of success.

During the last seven months the public have given overwhelming support to the Opposition. The public are anxious about the quality of water and about the pollution of our rivers. Opinion polls showed that there was 96 per cent. opposition to this measure. Today we have heard that only 2 per cent. of the public are in favour of it. I am quite sure, having analysed *The Observer* poll, that the 2 per cent. is made up of the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister for Water and Planning.

Mr. Burt *rose*——

Mr Bradley: I see that the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) is leaping to the Government's support. However, having looked at his majority I do not think that, if I were he, I should be standing up quite so confidently because I believed that the public in Bury like the Bill.

This last-minute amendment is the last obnoxious amendment to an obnoxious Bill which the public do not support. The Government have tried to mislead the public into thinking that this is merely a transitional arrangement. If that is so, why oh why did a Minister not stand up months ago and table the amendment as a major plank in the Government's war against pollution? There was absolute silence. The industry has turned on the Government. It feared what would happen if it had to comply with the quality of water and sampling requirements that had been in force during the previous few months. The industry said to the Government, "We want an easy ride. Please, Minister, give us that easy ride." Of course the Minister gave it that easy ride.

The new water companies want the assets, the land and the juicy contracts but they do not want the liabilities that go with the good bits. If they have to take on the old liabilities, they know that privatisation will not be successful. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) so eloquently put it, why oh why when the Government abolished the county councils, including the Greater Manchester council, did they not wipe the slate clean and remove all the liabilities? Instead of doing that, they transferred them to the new district authorities, which had to take them over. Any litigation that was outstanding at that stage was not suddenly wiped out. The public were not told that, because the Government were abolishing the metropolitan authorities, any cases against them would be expunged. Those cases were passed on, in the same way as prosecutions ought to be passed on to the new water companies.

However much the Minister may protest otherwise, the powers of the National Rivers Authority will be undermined from day one. That has to be contrasted with the excellent proposals of the Labour party. The Labour Government after the next general election will ensure that provision is made for environmental protection.

The Minister has tried to justify the amendment on four points, which were as shallow as many of his other arguments. I know that time is limited, but I wish to pick up one point. Will the Minister make absolutely clear what will happen to private prosecutions that are already in the pipeline? Will those well-researched private prosecutions, with samples taken and very effective cases put together, fall when the new companies take over, regardless of their status or the period in which they have built up? Will all those private prosecutions fall as a result of the amendment? We need to be absolutely clear about that.

6.30 pm

In the final half hour of the debate, it must be said that the Labour party has had to be seen as the real safeguarder of the environment and as the people who really care about the environment and pollution. I have spoken at meetings throughout the country, particularly in Manchester, my city. The people of Manchester will not forgive the Government for trying to privatise their water.

I have spoken at meetings all over Greater Manchester and not one voice has been raised in support of the Bill. The public have expressed massive anxiety about the quality of their water, local beaches, and rivers. They know that that can be effectively controlled and monitored and better standards implemented only by public investment in our water industry. The Labour party is committed to that. When a Labour Government get back into power they will bring water back as a public utility, with proper safeguards and proper environmental controls. We will not have to give handouts to people who want to make a quick buck out of our water.

The Bill has been framed to give profits to the City slickers, to people who do not care about our environment or the quality of our water. That will be the vanguard of the defeat of the hon. Member for Bury, North and many other Conservative Members who do not care about our environment.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I hope that the House will forgive me if I move away from party political hyperbole to mention my concern about amendment No. 320, which appears to provide an avenue for transferring the pollution liability, following the issue of consents to pollution, to private water authorities when the Bill is enacted. That would be fine if the monitoring of pollution in the existing system were adequate. It is not and it should be improved. I need some reassurance that the proposal in amendment No. 320 will do the job.

My particular concern is the pollution of water by fluoridation. I have no doubt about the Government's commitment to pure water, but I am not sure that they fully understand what pure water is. For years they accepted that the existing legislation on the purity of water allowed fluoridation, and for years the anti-fluoridationists said that the Government's interpretation of the law that the fluoridation of water was in accordance with the water legislation was wrong. Eventually, the matter was tested and a court in Scotland decided that the Government's interpretation of what was meant by the purity of water was wrong. The Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985 was passed to make right what had hitherto been wrong. For many years successive Governments were wrong about what was meant by pure water.

The Government have provided for polluting the water by allowing water authorities, on the request of health authorities, to add fluoride to the water. Now, in amendment No. 166, the possibility is to be transferred to the Secretary of State, if he sees fit, which he may not, and if he can get the permission of the Treasury—which the Treasury will be reluctant to give, as it is with any blank cheque—for the continuing provision of an indemnity if evil effects follow the fluoridation of water. If I were a cost-conscious water undertaker, I should be wary of relying on the ifs and buts of amendment No. 166, which we have just allowed into the Bill, to get me out of financial trouble in the event of an accidental excessive discharge causing suffering to humans.

To repeat my four-and-a-half-hour introduction to a speech on the evils of fluoridation—the mass medication of our drinking water by a poison when the dose is unknown because it is uncontrollable, when individual susceptibility to harm is unknown, when the value to an individual is unknown and when there is substantial evidence that it is unbeneficial to the teeth, harmful to the health and is a massive infringement of the liberty of the individual to be forced medically to be treated against his will—would be out of order, so I have no intention of doing so. But I hope that I am in order when I suggest that the conditions set out in amendment No. 320,

"(a) a condition that requires that authority to take samples of any matter discharged;

(b) a condition that requires that authority to furnish any person with information about samples taken by that authority"

and that set out in paragraph (c) are totally and utterly inadequate. As they exist now in our water provision, they do not work. They have done nothing to limit the possibility of a Camelford incident. Had hexafluorosilicicacid been poured into the water supply, it would have killed people and not fish and would have done much more than cause sickness and ill-health to the people in that area.

The present rules have done nothing to stop the current overdose of fluoride as it gets into our systems cumulatively through food, industrial processes, toothpaste—which has a high incidence of fluoride and is swallowed by children—fluoride tablets and the one part per million in the water supply where it is fluoridated. The overfeeding of the water supply has recently been tabulated in north Lincolnshire, where for many years an excess above the one part per million has gone into the drinking water. At 15 January 1986, 3·88 parts per million were put into the drinking water. That is just one example. Often when a test is carried out and the figures are forthcoming it appears that the proportion is above the limit that is allowed.

An increasing incidence of mottling of the teeth throughout the country is disfiguring young people, particularly girls, because levels of fluoride of one part per million or 1·5 parts per million have a considerable effect, but the Government seem to have taken no account of it. There is evidence that 10 per cent. of young people have their teeth adversely affected and disfigured by as little as 2 mg of fluoride per day.

I understand that this debate must now come to an end. This is a shortened version of my fluoridation speech, but the provision for monitoring the addition of fluoride to our water at the point of entry into the system is not satisfactory. Therefore, it is important for us to start monitoring the amount of fluoride in our sewage at the point of exit. That is why the conditions in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) should be toughened. They should take account of the fluoride content of sewage. Only then would we know the volume of fluoride which comes out of the body and that would produce some idea of the enormous amount more which is retained in the body. One of the great evils of fluoride is that it does not pass out of the system at anything like the rate it should to be healthy. The proposed provisions are inadequate because they do not improve upon the existing system of checking consents which is totally inadequate.

Of course, there is another way of stopping the risk of disfiguring teeth and the threat to the life and health of people, and that is to do what was done in West Germany, Holland and Sweden. Because of the medical objections, and to some extent the political objections, to the dangers of fluoridating public drinking water, fluoridation of the water was banned. I have no doubt that during our lifetime fluoride in the drinking water of the United Kingdom will be banned because eventually Governments will realise

[Mr. Ivan Lawrence]

what a danger it is to people's health, quite apart from the fact that it is an appalling infringement of the individual's liberty.

Mr. Morley: During the debate, I have heard arguments that have been somewhat tortuous and bizarre. It is remarkable that some hon. Members have argued that simply because the water authorities are moving from the public to the private authority they are no longer responsible for past misdemeanours and discharge levels. It is as though the Minister—I do not wish this upon him—were suddenly hit by a National Bus Company bus and broke his arm, the bus company was broken up and sold to other divisions and the company said, "We no longer have that corporate structure. We are no longer responsible for the damage that occurred under the other company, even though the same management and capital investment are in place and we have the same vehicles and installations." That is what is happening with the water authorities. To argue otherwise is ludicrous.

People in my constituency are not happy about the relaxation of discharge limits placed on sewage works. The limit on sewage outfall at the villages of Winteringham and Winterton is to be relaxed. At present, raw sewage is pumped into the Humber, having gone through merely a screening process to remove the larger bits. Under the Government's proposals, the companies will be able to pump raw sewage into rivers for a year. It will take that long to carry out the sampling and collect all the information that is needed before action can be taken.

The Minister may recall that the Opposition argued that the National Rivers Authority should have been set up a year in advance of privatisation so that it was up and running, ready to do the job it was supposed to do. That would have been a year in which to put things right and divert some money. The Minister could easily do that, even at this stage, by recommending postponement of the flotation for a year to tackle these problems.

To help, I shall give the Minister some suggestions about how the water companies could do that. They could divert the millions of pounds spent on stupid advertisements telling people what they already know, which would go a long way towards dealing with some of the problems. By postponing the flotation, £850 million a year could be saved—the cost of the privatisation programme that will bear on consumers every year in which the water companies are in the private sector. The water authorities' profits could be diverted to deal with infrastructure investment, but that cannot be done when they are due to be flogged off. That is why the Government are transferring the water authorities to the private sector without taking account of my modest suggestion to delay flotation for a year. In doing that, the Minister is polluting our rivers and putting our water quality standards at risk.

By voting for this measure, the Minister is breaking the law. By encouraging Conservative Members to do the same, he is encouraging them to break the law. That law is EEC directive 79/409, a wildlife directive, which states:

"Member States shall strive to avoid pollution or deterioration of habitats".

By giving this 12-month exemption from prosecution—a licence to pollute—the Government are in breach of that EEC directive. Every member of the Government who votes for this measure votes for a breach of that directive. I hope that my hon. Friends will take this matter up with Labour Members of the European Parliament—who, following the last European election, represent most people in the United Kingdom—and insist that the EEC take action through European courts, as the Government are clearly in breach of that directive.

6.45 pm

The Government may win the vote, using their usual steamroller tactics, but they have lost the arguments on water privatisation all the way along. Every opinion poll and every person to whom one talks says that that is so. To suggest that the public have been misled is patronising to the people who have weighed up the arguments, considered the facts and rightly concluded that water privatisation will do nothing to bring forward improvements in water quality standards and will, at worst, jeopardise what we already have and undermine those standards. In the amendments, the Government have been putting forward not green policies but greedy policies, and they will pay the price for them.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: We have had an interesting debate on an important topic. The Minister started in a typical way. Sometimes I think that his tactic in these debates is to sound so boring that we will all lose interest and perhaps go away. Sometimes he wants to sound so technical that people will feel intimidated. As that tactic has not worked so far throughout our proceedings, he was rather hopeful in expecting it to work today.

In one way, it is appropriate that this is the last amendment and the last debate during the Bill's passage. The Government's action—first, in relaxing the consent levels for sewage treatment plants that are operating illegally and, now, in introducing this immunity—is typical of their attitudes towards pollution and the environment generally. Their action today blows the lid off any claim that they make that the Bill is remotely green. The amendment to give immunity to water companies whose sewage treatment plants have been operating illegally shows that the Government do not care about pollution, standards or the environment.

The Government have presided over an outrageous increase in pollution. There has been an enormous increase in pollution incidents of all kinds. In 1980-81, there were about 12,500 incidents. In 1987-88, there were 23,253 incidents. One reason for the increase has been the attitude of the water authorities—approved by the Government—in trying to persuade water polluters to reform rather than prosecuting them. Only about 1·5 per cent. are prosecuted. That approach has meant that polluters have found it cheaper to continue to pollute, and risk being caught, prosecuted and given a small fine, than to invest in pollution prevention.

The Government have told us many times that one reason for the few prosecutions is that the water authorities have set a bad example with sewage treatment plants, hence the proposals—which we would take further—for an independent National Rivers Authority. We were told that we had to separate the gamekeeper and poacher to solve these problems, yet the NRA is to be handicapped from the start because of the Government's amendments. If the NRA cannot prosecute the water companies for breaches by sewage treatment plants, what will lesser polluters say when the NRA tries to prosecute them during that first year once the water authorities are privatised

when it is imperative that the right tone is set? If prosecutions are not possible during that first year—we have established that they are not—that is the wrong message, as one Conservative Member said yesterday.

We have heard about the statements made by the chairman of the South West water authority, a man who regards his future career as being in the privatised water industry. He has said that he believes that it will be the job of the new private water companies to outwit the regulators. That is recorded as his approach. The regulators will not need outwitting, because the Secretary of State is doing that job for the companies. He is making private prosecutions virtually impossible, and he is tying one hand of the National Rivers Authority behind its back before it even starts its work. That may have a knock-on effect on its ability to prosecute.

It was significant that the Minister did not mention any deadline by which the sewage treatment plants will have to comply. I take that as an admission that there is no deadline for compliance. In Committee, he said that he hoped—

"in some circumstances and when it is easy"—

that sewage treatment plants might come up to scratch by 1992, but he has given no guarantee that that will be the case. His letter to the water authorities states:

"Where additional investment cannot be justified in terms of significant benefits . . . meaning the sewage treatment plants may have to continue operating below the standards that are required."

The Government's priority has not been discernible during the debate. Their priority is not the price of water, the quality of drinking water, or ensuring that sewage treatment plants do not pollute our rivers. Their priority is simply to ensure that the water companies are able to take advantage of the industry's assets without taking on any of the liabilities.

The hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) said yesterday that this amendment would "send the wrong signals" to the privatised water industry because it would tell it that pollution was all right. For once, I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is the green light for polluters.

The Minister is clearly telling us that the private water companies want to take on all the water industry's assets, but they want none of the liabilities. Yesterday, when we tried to ensure that the public's land assets would be protected, the Government voted down our amendment.

Earlier in our debates on the water industry, Opposition Members offered to support those parts of the Bill that could have been used to improve the environment. We offered to support and strengthen the National Rivers Authority to tackle pollution problems and to start to improve our environment. We said that if the Government had dropped part II of the Bill, we could have established the National Rivers Authority quickly. The Government were not interested in that. This amendment symbolises just what the Government are about—"forget standards, forget pollution problems, just make sure that the sale goes ahead."

The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) said that he hoped that the public would listen to our debate. The public have been listening to our debate, and that is why 79 per cent. of them are against water privatisation.

Mr. Leigh: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Taylor: I will not give way.

Ministers may bully Conservative Members into the Lobby tonight, as they have done on other occasions, but they cannot bully the electorate. This Bill will be one of the nails in the Government's coffin.

Mr. Howard: I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) and for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on their speeches. They exposed the fallacies that were advanced by the Opposition. Although I cannot entirely agree with the remarks of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) about fluoridation, I can assure him that the monitoring arrangements that will be in place under the National Rivers Authority as a result of the Bill will be a substantial advance in pollution control, and I hope that he will derive a great deal of comfort from that.

We have heard from Opposition Members what we have heard throughout our proceedings on the Bill. They make their prepared speeches, and they will not listen to any of the arguments, however compelling they may be. No more compelling example of that could there be than the repeated assertion by practically every Opposition Member who has spoken in the debate that the effect of this amendment is to make it impossible for prosecutions to take place in the first 12 months after privatisation. That is wrong, untrue, and entirely inaccurate. It has no basis in the provisions contained in the amendments. We have demonstrated in great detail how mistaken that viewpoint was.

The extraordinary thing about the attitude of Opposition Members—it should not still amaze me, although it does—is that each of them has complained about the state of our water environment, but they have failed to recognise that the existing arrangements for our water environment are responsible for the fact that it is not as good as we would like it to be. The Opposition refrain is, "Things are dreadful as they are; let us keep them exactly as they are."

The most extraordinary claim of all was by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley), who said that Opposition Members, in their attitude to this legislation, would work with environmental groups. The hon. Lady referred to 10 years ago. I invite the House to consider the position as it was 10 years ago when this Government came to office and when the Control of Pollution Act 1974 lay unimplemented by the Labour party. Were Labour Members working with environmental groups 10 years ago when that Act was unimplemented and when investment in sewerage services had been drastically cut by the Labour party? Were they working with environmental groups 10 years ago when the water authorities were in a hopelessly inhibited position, when operators and regulators were given deemed consents for their treatment works discharges? Were they working with environmental groups when they put those provisions in place?

On the performance of sewage treatment works, we did not know then what proportion failed to meet their consent standards. When it was in power, the Labour party had not even bothered to collect the information. Were Labour Members working with environmental groups when they kept that information from the public? They denied the public the information that they needed to find out what was happening with the pollution of our water environment, and the right of public prosecution was absolutely nowhere to be seen.

[Mr. Howard]

During those 10 years, substantial progress has been made in putting right those wrongs. There has been a substantial increase in investment and in the information that is made available to the public. The public are now able to use powers to bring private prosecutions which were not even contemplated when the Labour party was in power. We shall take those advances further and we shall build on them. With this legislation, we shall provide the framework for the clean-up of our water environment that the whole nation is anxious to see.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 313 to 319 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 320, in page 356, line 48, at end insert—

"(4) Where the rights and liabilities in respect of any such consent are transferred to a water authority's successor company in accordance with a scheme under Schedule 2 to this Act and the conditions of that consent include one or more of the following, that is to say—

(a) a condition that requires that authority to take samples of any matter discharged;

(b) a condition that requires that authority to furnish any person with information about samples taken by that authority; or

(c) a condition that is contravened where there is a failure by more than a specified number of samples taken by that authority to satisfy specified requirements,

then any such condition as is mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b) above shall cease to have effect on the transfer date and any such condition as is mentioned in paragraph (c) above shall have effect on and after that date as if any samples taken on behalf of the Authority in exercise, at any time on or after that date, of a power conferred by this Act, but no other samples, were the samples falling to be taken into account for the purposes of that condition."

Read a Second time.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, in line 13, leave out from 'paragraph' and insert

'those paragraphs shall have effect on and after the transfer date in the same manner as before that date, except that any reference to samples taken by that authority shall be taken to mean samples taken by the National Rivers Authority insofar as it refers to samples taken after the transfer date.'.

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 203, Noes 309.

Division No. 277] **[6.58 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allason, Rupert
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted

Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen Adams.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil

Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Lords amendment No. 320 agreed to.

It being after Seven o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the order [3 July], to put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded by that hour.*

Lords amendments Nos. 321 to 341 agreed to.

Committee appointed to draw up Reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to certain of their amendments to the Bill: Mr. Howard, Mr. Alan Howarth, Mr. Roger King, Mr. Allen McKay and Mrs. Ann Taylor; Three to be the quorum.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

To withdraw immediately.

Reasons for disagreeing to certain of the Lords amendments reported, and agreed to: to be communicated to the Lords.

Antarctic Minerals Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I must inform the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition.

7.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The main purpose of the Bill is to enable the United Kingdom to ratify the convention on the regulation of Antarctic mineral resource activities. The convention was adopted by consensus at Wellington on 2 June last year and was signed on behalf of the United Kingdom on 22 March. The Bill will prohibit exploration and mining development activities in Antarctica by British companies and nationals. It permits prospecting activities authorised by the United Kingdom Government or another contracting party to the convention. It enables the Secretary of State to grant licences for prospecting activities in accordance with the terms of the convention.

The Bill is technical and it seems unexceptionable. However, there are issues at stake in the Bill that are critical for the future of the world environment. It gives us an important opportunity to protect our environment. If we do not take that opportunity, we risk inflicting catastrophic damage on our planet. Those are truly apocalyptic assertions for a technical Bill. To explain and justify those assertions, I need to remind the House about the delicate situation in Antarctica.

Seven states—Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway and the United Kingdom—claim territorial sovereignty over sectors of Antarctica. Those so-called "claimant" states say that whatever minerals there may be in their respective Antarctic territories are theirs and theirs alone. Other states, most notably the United States, the Soviet Union, China, Japan, and the Federal Republic of Germany, do not recognise the sovereignty claims of the seven other states. Those non-claimant states say that they have a right to take minerals in the Antarctic wherever they may find them.

That difficult situation is further complicated by the fact that one sector in Antarctica is not claimed by any state. Another sector is claimed by three states: Argentina, Chile and the United Kingdom.

As a result of that complex situation, over 30 years ago President Eisenhower issued an invitation to 11 other countries to come to Washington to negotiate a treaty on Antarctica. The background was increasing super-power tension in Antarctica and escalating disputes over sovereignty. Shots had actually been fired in the Antarctic.

The outcome of the Washington meeting was the Antarctic treaty, which had two achievements. First, it created out of Antarctica a "continent for science". Secondly, it provided a means for managing what had become literally the explosive issue of sovereignty. The means consisted of a provision, article IV, which simply set the issue of sovereignty aside or, more colloquially, article IV freezes the issue of sovereignty. To give that some chance of success, the treaty also demilitarised Antarctica

and provided for on-site inspection. Elegant and daring in its simplicity, the treaty has been described as, and has proved to be, one of the most effective of post-war treaties.

However, the Antarctic treaty said nothing about minerals. After many years of discussion, the treaty parties agreed on two points. First, they agreed that a total ban on mineral activity was simply not attainable and, secondly, because of disputes over sovereignty, a regime governing mineral activity had to be in place well before any mining activity or prospecting began. As far back as 1970, it was recognised that if at some stage important mineral resources were found, an unregulated and dangerous scramble could develop. That could obviously have a most damaging effect on the environment in Antarctica.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): It is apparent that most of the minerals in Antarctica have not yet been discovered and it is not likely that mineral licences will be granted for the next 50 or 60 years, so why take the power now? Will this be comparable to the Deep Sea Mining (Temporary Provisions) Act 1981 when we wanted manganese nodules from the deep of the ocean and the House therefore took powers to cover our own territory?

Mr. Eggar: No mining activity of any kind, including prospecting, has yet taken place. The Bill permits only prospecting, and then in defined circumstances only. If, following negotiation of a protocol, it was to be decided that exploration and development should be permitted, the Government would return to the House with another Bill specifically covering those two areas. If my hon. Friend will bear with me, I shall develop that theme later.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Minister ruling out any possibility of making that area off-limits for mining? Many hon. Members feel that any mining in that area is unacceptable. Has that consideration been entertained? Are the British Government to fall in line with the French and Australians and with their attitudes towards the Antarctic?

Mr. Eggar: The French have not yet made their position clear. The Australian Government have said that they will not sign the convention. I shall comment on that later. We have made it absolutely clear that all that this Bill does is to allow prospecting under certain defined conditions.

Mr. Banks *rose*——

Mr. Eggar: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will bear with me, because this is a complex area and I should like to explain our thinking. However, I shall, of course, give way again if the hon. Gentleman is dissatisfied with the answers.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Will the Minister ensure that he tells the House exactly what happened in the discussions with the Australian Prime Minister, so that the House has a full account of those discussions? Will he also tell us whether this matter will be raised with the President of France shortly, when the Prime Minister meets him?

Mr. Banks: If there is prospecting, surely there will also be mining.

Mr. Eggar: In answer to the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), if he will bear with me I shall be dealing with the Australian view later. I shall give way at that stage if he wishes to intervene.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): I wonder if the Minister would explain whether combustion gases from petrol and diesel oil used in prospecting and possible mining would not further damage the depleted ozone layer, and if there should be a volcanic eruption, sending sulphuric acid into the atmosphere, which happens every few years, would not that decimate the ozone layer? Will the Minister give a guarantee that no mining will be allowed until the moves to prevent further damage to the ozone layer have come into effect and time is allowed for the ozone layer to repair itself?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Lady has made several jumps from one complex issue to another. I repeat the assurance that I have already given—this Bill does not permit mining; it permits only prospecting—*[Interruption.]* That is an important division. Perhaps the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will bear with me.

As I have already said, the Antarctic treaty said nothing about minerals. It was recognised that we had to try to introduce a regime to govern future possible prospecting and mining activity before embarking on such activities. On five occasions in the 1970s, the possibility of a binding moratorium to prevent any minerals activity was discussed. On none of those occasions was there a consensus in favour of a binding moratorium.

As I have already said, there has so far not been any serious interest in exploiting minerals. However, the treaty partners were not prepared to rule out the possibility that minerals might one day be extracted from Antarctica under defined, environmentally sound conditions. It has been said that the convention, and in consequence this Bill, is some sort of miner's charter. Nothing could be further from the truth.

To demonstrate this, I want to go into some detail about the convention and the Bill. The convention provides for three stages of mineral activity: prospecting, exploration and development. Prospecting is aimed at identifying areas of mineral resource potential. It rules out deep dredging, excavations—that covers the point raised by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon)—and drilling to depths of more than 25 m. In that context, it is important to realise that the ice cap in Antarctica is over one mile deep. Exploration is aimed at identifying and evaluating specific mineral resource occurrences or deposits. Development is what it says—the development of specific mineral resource deposits.

That distinction between prospecting on the one hand and exploration and development on the other is critical to the way the convention works. "Prospecting" is defined so as to ensure that the act of prospecting has no more effect on the environment than similar scientific research activity. Such research activity is already permitted and has been of immense value. It was, after all, the work by the British Antarctic Survey which identified the hole in the ozone layer. For that reason, prospecting is not subject to authorisation by the Commission or the other bodies which the convention will set up.

However, prospecting must be carried out in accordance with the convention. Prospecting bodies will have to comply with any relevant measures which the Commission may adopt in the future. It is the responsibility of the prospector's country to make sure that the prospector complies with the convention.

The convention naturally recognises that exploration and development involve far greater possible risks to the

[Mr. Eggar]

environment. The convention sets out stringent environmental controls of exploration and development processes. No exploration or development can begin until all member states of the commission unanimously agree that it should do so. Each state party—they include all Antarctic treaty consultative parties—therefore effectively has a veto on exploration and development within Antarctica.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): On the point about states having a veto on the agreement, I understand that Australia and France intend to use their veto. If that is the case, from what the Minister is saying, the agreement cannot proceed, so would it not be more sensible for the Government to decide not to proceed with this agreement but to argue for a different agreement, perhaps in the concept of a world park?

Mr. Eggar: If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me, I shall deal with those arguments later. I must correct him on a matter of fact: France has not declared its position, although Australia has done so.

Moreover, the convention bans any exploration and commercial development until a separate protocol on liability has been negotiated. That protocol will set out detailed rules and procedures governing the operator's liability if damage should be caused to the environment. The liability protocol will build on the liability provisions applying to prospecting already in the convention. Negotiations on the protocol have not yet begun, but when they do they will probably last several years.

When those negotiations are satisfactorily completed, the Government intend to return to the House with another Bill which will, of course, be debated in the House. That Bill will implement the liability protocol and provide for exploration and development in accordance with the convention. But that is for the future. Tonight the House is not being asked to enact legislation enabling British operators to undertake mineral exploration and development in Antarctica.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*—

Mr. Eggar: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way now. I shall give way later if he is not satisfied with the explanation by that stage.

The present Bill only covers prospecting. It actually prohibits for the first time any British national or company from undertaking any exploration or development activity. What is more, it bans all prospecting activity, except that which is in accordance with a licence issued by the Secretary of State. It provides that the Secretary of State shall not grant a prospecting licence unless he is satisfied that the activities he is asked to authorise will be consistent with the international obligations of the United Kingdom. Specifically, the Secretary of State must be satisfied that the authorised activities would not cause

"(a) significant adverse effects on air and water quality;
(b) significant changes in atmospheric, terrestrial or marine environments;
(c) significant changes in the distribution, abundance or productivity of populations of species of fauna or flora;
(d) further jeopardy to endangered or threatened species or populations of such species; or
(e) degradation of, or substantial risk to, areas of special biological, scientific, historic, aesthetic or wilderness significance."

Neither can my right hon. and learned Friend issue a licence until he is satisfied that—and I quote again:

"(a) technology and procedures are available to provide for safe operations;
(b) there exists the capacity to monitor key environmental parameters and ecosystem components"

and so on.

So we are talking only about prospecting; and then we are only permitting prospecting under extremely stringent conditions—so stringent that the Government believe that, provided the convention enters into force, no Antarctic mineral prospecting activity could take place which would significantly or adversely affect the Antarctic environment.

I have now reached the point raised by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. The convention depends for its entry into force on 16 countries ratifying or acceding to it. The United States, the Soviet Union and the seven claimant states—including Australia—must be among those 16. As one of the claimants, it follows that our ratification of the convention is necessary.

That then is the position if the convention comes into force. I believe that the House will agree that the protection for the environment offered by the convention is very considerable. What would happen if the convention does not enter into force?

In 1977, the Antarctic treaty consultative parties decided that each of them should urge their nationals to "refrain from all exploration and exploitation of Antarctic mineral resources while making progress towards the timely adoption of an agreed regime concerning Antarctic mineral resource activities".

That 1977 voluntary moratorium was extended last year by the terms of the final act of the conference at which the Antarctic minerals convention was adopted.

The final act says:

"The Meeting agreed that all States represented at the Meeting would urge their nationals and other States to refrain from Antarctic mineral resource activities as defined in the Convention pending its timely entry into force".

I want to underscore those words

"pending its timely entry into force".

Therefore, the continued effectiveness of the voluntary moratorium on mining activity is conditional on the convention entering into force and upon it doing so in a timely manner. So if any of the key states were finally to rule out ratifying or acceding to the convention, that state would, by its actions, have destroyed the existing voluntary moratorium. That state would bear a severe responsibility for the consequences of its decision.

Those consequences are clear. At some stage, perhaps not so far in the future, some entity would go to Antarctica to find out whether Antarctica might contain mineral resources which could be exploited. Such prospecting, exploration and development would be entirely unregulated. There would be no control over that entity's effect on the environment. Mining would inevitably raise sensitive sovereignty issues and consequent dispute and possibly conflict. The Antarctic treaty system could begin to unravel. It was the thought of such mining activity that led to the negotiation of the convention in the first place.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): One of the things that one regularly finds when talking to oil companies about their decision to invest in a particular place is that they look for what they believe is a stable

political regime. That is why they have been prepared to invest in the North sea. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that, without any legal or licensing framework or without any security as to the political regime—for example, if there were questions of sovereignty hanging over it—those companies would be prepared to put at stake considerable investment?

Mr. Eggar: The point is that we do not know whether companies would be prepared to prospect. It is far better to take measures now on a worldwide co-ordinated scale so that, if they wish to go down there and prospect, they can do so with proper environmental safeguards. If we do not have those environmental safeguards, entities could go down there and cause unlimited damage.

Mr. Morley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Eggar: If the hon. Gentleman will let me continue, I shall be willing to give way later, but I must be allowed to develop this part of the argument.

One of the main concerns of both sides of the House is to ensure the protection of the Antarctic environment. The fulfilment of that aim requires that international harmony in the Antarctic be maintained. Indeed, our first priority must be to maintain that harmony. If the United Kingdom were not to ratify the convention, we would be contributing to future discord in the Antarctic and therefore jeopardising the protection of the Antarctic environment.

The House is aware—Opposition Members have already intervened to make the point—that the Australian Government have recently announced that they believe that there should never be any mineral resource activity in the Antarctic of any kind. The Australian Government want the Antarctic to be declared a wilderness park in which only scientific research and a small amount of tourism would be allowed.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Toryism?

Mr. Eggar: Tourism.

The Australian Government aspire to a comprehensive Antarctic environmental protection convention that would ban all Antarctic mineral resource activities. As has already been said, as a claimant state, Australia's eventual ratification or accession is essential for the convention to enter into force.

The British Government are disappointed at Australia's decision, particularly since Australia played a major role in agreeing the convention. Despite the views put to us by the Australian Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, we believe that the Australians have not considered the possible consequences of their action and have not taken account of the possibilities offered by the convention to meet Australia's stated public objectives.

The Antarctic treaty has succeeded over the past 30 years because every member of that treaty system has exercised forbearance and no member has pushed its interest beyond the point where it can be tolerated by others. The treaty system has also depended on an implicit assumption that, once an agreement has been reached by consensus, all parties to that consensus will confirm and implement the agreement. The Australian move has gone against both of those tenets of the Antarctic treaty system.

The Australian case rests on an unsubstantiated assertion that Antarctic mineral resource activity is now suddenly environmentally unacceptable. The idea of maintaining the Antarctic as an unsullied frozen paradise free of environmentally damaging mining activities is attractive. It is an easy political slogan, especially for hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West.

But the Australians cannot claim the moral high ground resulting from some sort of conversion on the road to Damascus, because the purpose of the convention is precisely to avoid environmental damage from mining in Antarctica. Perhaps Australia does not believe that rational objection to mineral activity will be effective when decisions come to be made under the convention. We find that puzzling, to say the least.

Dr. John Gilbert (Dudley, East): Leaving aside the merits of what the Australians may or may not have said now or in the past, is it the case that, if the Australian Government refuse to ratify the convention, it will not come into effect?

Mr. Eggar: The Australian Government have said that they will not sign the convention, but they have not ruled out ratification or accession to the convention——

Dr. Gilbert: A technical difference.

Mr. Eggar: It is more than technical—it is an important difference. I want to explain why we believe the Australian decision is inappropriate and why, despite that decision, we are determined to press ahead with the Bill.

Australia's Antarctic partners have a right to ask Australia for its reasons for inflicting damage on the consensus machinery of the Antarctic treaty system. They have a right to ask Australia why it has taken a path that could result in a collapse of that treaty. What is more, the Australian alternative, a ban on all mineral activity, is simply unattainable. The route of a ban on mining activity was tried throughout the 1970s, but it proved impossible to reach an agreement on such a ban. The fact is that the convention is the only attainable means to ensure the protection of the Antarctic environment.

Even if an outright ban on mineral activity could be negotiated—we do not believe that it could—it would be extremely unlikely to work. In a world of increasing population and increasing pressures on a finite resource base, prospecting for minerals would continue. Instead of such prospecting being carried out openly within Antarctica and subject to proper control, as laid out in the convention, it would be done covertly under the guise of scientific research. No one would be able to use scientific research techniques, such as seismic investigation of the structure of the continental shelf of Antarctica, or conduct a geological investigation without those perfectly viable scientific research techniques raising questions as to whether they were prospecting activities in disguise.

At this stage, the world needs not a grand gesture, however superficially attractive it might be, but an example of how environmentally properly internationally negotiated sustainable development can be pursued. The Antarctic minerals convention is just such an example. In shorthand, what the convention says to mining entities is, "Yes, you can go to the Antarctic and, under strict environmental controls, you can find out whether the Antarctic has any minerals in it that might be worth exploiting. You should know, however, that if you think you have found anything, the primary and overriding

[Mr. Eggar]

concern of the convention is to ensure the protection of the Antarctic environment." Any proposed activity that posed significant risk of damage to that environment would be stopped.

Mr. Morley: Earlier, the Minister read out a list of areas in which protection would operate, and it sounded fine. Who will control the conditions of the actual prospecting? Will we operate that control as a Government or as partners to the treaty? As the Minister said, the treaty says that such prospecting will not take place if it causes significant adverse effects to the environment, but how does one define what is significant? Surely that is an enormous loophole in the treaty.

Mr. Eggar: I have already outlined the procedures that must be followed to obtain a prospecting licence. As the hon. Gentleman knows, they are elaborate and, before the Secretary of State gives such a licence, he must be satisfied that all the procedures have been met. If we were to introduce a Bill that governed exploration and development following the successful negotiation of the liability protocol, such exploration and development would come under the terms of the convention and they will be controlled by the commission and the other various convention bodies set out in that convention.

Earlier, the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) asked me whether the convention was effectively dead as a result of the Australian decision. We do not believe that that is the case, and there are three reasons why that should not happen. First, we do not accept that our Government should accept that a treaty system which is bound by the consensus rule should enable one state to dictate to the other treaty states. We believe that the consequences of the Australian decision must be debated and resolved in the same spirit of compromise and mutual accommodation which are the essential prerequisites if the Antarctic treaty system is to survive.

Secondly, we believe that the Australian decision is wrong in principle. We believe in the convention and we hope that the Australians will change their minds. Demonstrating our belief in the convention is the best way to proceed, and we intend to do so by giving ourselves the enabling powers to ratify that convention.

Thirdly, there are many other ways in which to protect the Antarctic environment. Such protection can be afforded by dealing directly with such issues as pollution from ships, waste disposal at Antarctic stations, the environmental effects of tourism and so on. Most important of all, however, a start should be made on the negotiation of the liability protocol called for by the minerals convention. The convention says that the rules and procedures developed in that protocol

"shall be designed to enhance the protection of the Antarctic environment."

If the Australians are serious in their concern about the environment, they should be in there fighting for their particular points during the protocol negotiations.

If we fail to pass the Bill, we shall throw away the only practical means of regulating mining activity in the Antarctic. We shall ensure instead that issues of territorial sovereignty will arise in an unmanageable form. The Antarctic treaty system may well crumble and the international harmony and co-operation that have been the hallmark of matters relating to Antarctica in the past 30 years will come to an end.

If we give the Bill a Second Reading tonight, we cannot of course thereby guarantee that the convention comes into force and that the possible adverse consequences will be avoided. Whether the convention comes into force will depend on others following our example. By passing the Bill, however, we shall give a necessary and important signal of our continuing faith in the Antarctic treaty system. Furthermore, it will be a signal that patient international negotiation is the way in which to preserve the environment in Antarctica—not grand and ill-thought-out gestures.

I commend the Bill to the House.

7.48 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and add instead thereof:

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which fails to take account of major changes since the signing of the Convention on the Regulation of Antarctic Minerals Resource Activity (CRAMRA) including the Exxon Valdez disaster, increased public concern about ozone depletion and the greenhouse effect and the declaration of opposition to signing the Convention by the governments of Australia and France, and fails to make provision for Her Majesty's Government to join new negotiations for a comprehensive Environmental Protection Convention."

The amendment declines to give a Second Reading to the Bill for the stated reasons, but I should make it abundantly clear that the Opposition in no way imply any criticism of the excellent work undertaken by United Kingdom officials in negotiations to achieve the convention to which that Bill relates. We pay tribute to the diligence, patience and sincerity of them all. I hope that I will be excused if I pick out Dr. John Heap, an Edinburgh graduate—*[Interruption.]* Scottish Members will know why I choose him. In all seriousness, he has played a central role throughout the negotiations.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford) *rose*——

Mr. Foulkes: I have hardly begun my speech.

Mr. Burns: I am sorry to intervene so early in the hon. Gentleman's speech. Does he agree that there has been a dramatic turnabout since 20 April, when the Bill had its Second Reading in another place? On that occasion the Opposition spokesman welcomed the Bill and said that he would assist it throughout its passage.

Mr. Foulkes: I was wrong to give way and the hon. Gentleman was right to apologise for intervening. I shall be dealing with the speech of my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Cledwyn in a few moments.

Since the agreement was made in Wellington on 2 June last year, some dramatic events and substantial changes in public opinion must be taken into account in considering our approach to the Bill, the convention and to Antarctica in general. It should be noted that it is thanks to the Opposition that we are debating the issue on the Floor of the House at a reasonable hour rather than in the middle of the night. We arranged that because we wanted to acknowledge the importance of the changes.

The dramatic events and the changes in public opinion have influenced our thinking, and they should influence the Government's thinking as they have influenced the

thinking of other Governments—especially if we are to believe the Prime Minister, and she really has adopted the green mantle and suddenly discovered the importance of the environment and its protection. Even as early as Second Reading in another place, on a number of occasions my right hon. and noble Friend expressed his unease about the Bill and said that he would prefer all countries to agree to leave Antarctica alone and not to prospect and mine for minerals—*[Interruption.]* I am paraphrasing my right hon. and noble Friend's speech as the rules do not allow me to quote it.

It is naive in the extreme of the Minister to suggest that the Bill deals only with prospecting and that prospecting will not automatically lead to exploitation. Exploitation will follow prospecting as surely as night follows day. The Minister shakes his head, but he knows the inevitability of that happening. In the debate in another place it was not only my right hon. and noble Friend who expressed unease and reservations; other Peers did so, too. For example, Lord Buxton, who knows a thing or two about the Antarctic, said that he supported the Bill without enthusiasm and that his instincts and his sympathies were with those who wanted the Antarctic continent protected as a world park.

Even the Foreign Office's commentary said that the convention, as a compromise, was accepted with some reluctance. However, Dr. Drewry of the British Antarctic Survey, Dr. Heap, my noble Friend Lord Shackleton and the Minister all argue that it is the best that we can obtain and that if we do not have it there will be an unregulated rush for minerals. I understand and respect the argument that half a loaf is better than none, but I do not agree with it. We question whether the convention is as effective as the Minister and others have claimed. We also question whether the ideal is any longer unattainable.

I shall deal with our specific concerns about the convention and, therefore, the Bill. First, we are concerned about the difficulties of enforcement and the lack of effective sanctions. There is nothing in the Bill or in the convention to stop rogue countries colluding with their mining companies to flout the convention. A country might wish to encourage its mining companies to do that, and it is entirely possible under the convention.

The legal mechanisms to enforce the provisions of the convention are long and extremely cumbersome. Although it is clear how national companies will be regulated, it is not at all clear how multinational companies will be regulated. If the inspection, which is very important, is to be carried out by personnel of the British Antarctic Survey, that may have an adverse effect on its scientific work.

We are worried about the problems of enforcement. The semantic uncertainty that is characteristic of several key articles in the convention actually weakens it and could lead to endless confusion and dispute. For all those reasons we have doubts about the effectiveness and the enforceability of the convention.

The second area of equal concern is the imbalance of criteria in decision-making within the convention. The Foreign Office's commentary on the environmental aspects of the convention states:

> "The final decision is one that involves an overall balancing and judgment of the political and economic as well as the environmental aspects of the matter . . . It is therefore proper that such decisions should be taken in the relevant political forum."

We accept that but, given the Government's record of putting economic considerations before morality, let alone environmental protection, we are worried that the pressures from mining and other economic interests will invariably prevail.

Our third area of concern is the fragility of the Antarctic ecosystem, the irreversibility of damage and the uniqueness of Antarctica. None of those is properly taken into account. Paragraph 2 of article 8 states:

> "An operator shall be strictly liable for damage to the . . . ecosystems."

It says that the operator must clean up and take action to restore the status quo ante. How on this earth can an ecosystem be restored once it has been damaged? How can it be restored by the operator? He can clean up in many ways, but he cannot clean up that sort of damage. The operator has a number of other get outs; he can claim that the damage resulted from a natural disaster such as severe ice conditions, strong winds or seismic activity. There are loopholes galore.

We should listen carefully to Sir Peter Scott, who knows something about the Antarctic, who warned in a letter to *The Times* on 29 December 1986:

> "Damage to the fragile Antarctic wilderness from minerals operations, especially offshore oil exploitation"—

that is the particular interest in exploration—

> "would in many circumstances be irreversible and no level of protection could be stringent enough to guarantee there would be no damage."

Mr. Eggar: Everything that the hon. Gentleman has said refers to exploration and development, not to prospecting, which is the issue dealt with by the Bill. Does he agree that the liability protocol will cover his questions about exploration and development?

Mr. Foulkes: No, I do not accept that. First, what I have said is not connected just with exploitation and development. Some of it was connected with the original prospecting. As I said earlier, prospecting is the thin end of the wedge. We know that there will be a move on to development and exploitation. We know that in discussions of that protocol the pressure from the minerals lobby will be strong. That is not just the view of Peter Scott. The respected French scientist Jacques Cousteau agreed. He said:

> "the environmental consequences of industrial exploitation would be incalculable and irreversible."

He added:

> "This continent revealed its fragility due to the extreme simplicity of its ecosystems during a mission of our oceanographic vessel, the Calypso."

People who understand the area are worried about the kind of operation that will inevitably follow from the prospecting which, as the Minister says, is included in the Bill.

Fourthly, among our concerns is the reliance on consensus and unanimity, of which the Minister makes great play. But that is not as much of a safeguard as it appears and as the Minister claims. The requirement in the convention for the chairman to mediate in the case of a veto means that the pressure on the country exercising that veto will be intense. We have already seen that in another context with the Minister's pressure on the Australians today. We know from our experience of the EC the sort of pressure that can be brought to bear upon a country that exercises a veto. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) says, the Prime Minister, for all her bluster and her claims to be firm, has

[Mr. Foulkes]

given way on a number of occasions under such pressure. Moreover, the power of veto is likely to be used selectively. A nation refusing activities in one area will know that it might suffer the same fate when it wants to exploit in another. Therefore, it would be cautious about exercising a veto.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have just witnessed the Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary being consulted by the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), then going to a Box to which we are not supposed to refer, being advised and coming back to give the information to the hon. Gentleman. Will the information from the Box behind you be made available to all Back-Bench Members? If not, can we be told why such information is being passed?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I am very interested in what the hon. Gentleman says, but that is not a point of order for the Chair. There has been no breach of our Standing Orders.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), but the Minister needs all the information and advice that he can get from whatever quarter.

The convention begins to look more like a charter for mining companies to explore and exploit than a charter to protect the environment.

Since the convention was signed, significant developments have changed political, public and environmental perceptions. First, the public outrage—that is not too strong a word—at the oil spillages of the Exxon Valdez and, to a lesser extent, the Bahia Paraiso, has been dramatic. In the Exxon Valdez incident the scale and extent of environmental destruction overwhelmed the world community. The public came to realise that they had been lulled into a false sense of security and into believing the repeated assurances that an accident of such magnitude could never happen and that contingency clean-ups would work well and as planned.

The promised emergency response system failed completely and people round the world were shocked at the oil company's complacent and cavalier attitude towards the environmental catastrophe that it had brought about. The lessons for the Antarctic are there to be learnt from the Arctic disaster and from the damaging effect of the relatively small spillage of the Bahia Paraiso in the Antarctic itself.

Those lessons, together with increased awareness of environmental issues generally as well as other pressures, are resulting in second thoughts in other countries. In April 1989, the French Prime Minister, Mr. Rocard, said that France would not ratify the convention unless it contained stronger environmental safeguards, and President Mitterrand reaffirmed that on 13 June. I was surprised that the Minister seemed unaware of that today. Those statements are on the record, clear and unequivocal.

In May this year Australia announced it would not sign the convention and in a joint ministerial statement the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Minister of the Environment stated that Australia is

> "dedicated to the comprehensive protection of the Antarctic environment and in that context our strong commitment is that no mining at all—including oil drilling—should take place in and around the continent."

They said that it was both desirable and possible to seek stronger protection for the Antarctic environment than the minerals convention would provide. In place of the minerals convention, Australia proposes the development of a comprehensive environmental protection convention to be discussed at the 15th Antarctic treaty consultative meeting in Paris next October.

The Minister tried some scare tactics on us today and said that the moratorium on mineral prospecting would lapse if we did not go ahead with the minerals convention. It is inconceivable that the moratorium would not continue while a new convention was under negotiation. Of course, there would be a continued moratorium. As the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), one of the Democratic Members, said—*[Interruption.]* They keep changing their name which creates difficulties for all of us, but even more for them. He made a good point when he said that oil companies would be reluctant to go in while the legal title was unclear. The moratorium would continue and it is wrong for the Minister to adopt scare tactics to try to deflect us and the Australians from our aim.

The Australian proposal would ban all mining activity and establish an Antarctic wilderness park which would be developed within the framework of the Antarctic treaty system. It is important that it should be developed within that framework. With no disrespect to the United Nations, under whose auspices it has been proposed that the park should be developed, we, like the Australians, think that it would be easier and much more practical to develop it within the framework of the Antarctic treaty system.

The Minister tried to imply that that would stop legitimate scientific investigation. That is not the case. All legitimate scientific investigation would be possible. It is the aim of the Australians and those who support them to make sure that that would take place.

I also understand that India has come out in favour of that stance and that the Belgian foreign affairs committee has recommended that no Belgian company should participate in any commercial or industrial exploration of Antarctic mineral resources. That recommendation was approved by the Belgian Parliament last Friday. The Minister did not seem to know about that, but the Belgian Parliament is well ahead of us on that issue.

There is a groundswell of support behind the Australian initiative which Britain should join. The possibility of achieving a whole loaf rather than half a loaf is becoming a reality, and it will be even more likely if the United Kingdom's weight is behind such an endeavour.

It seemed likely that the convention on the regulation of Antarctic minerals resource activity would be ratified by sufficient parties, but many took the view, which we understand, that it should be accepted as the only feasible option and that we should concentrate on strengthening its environmental safeguards. But now the Australians and the French are not just signalling that they will use their veto on the minerals convention; they are leading the movement for an alternative environmental protection convention. That is a lead that we should follow. The Minister has not said, in response to numerous questions from my hon. Friends, what the alternative will be if the

Australians and the French refuse to sign the convention and if it is not ratified. It is neglectful and irresponsible of the Government not to provide an alternative.

Britain is rightly proud of its pioneering role in Antarctica. In the last century as well as in this century, we have contributed to the understanding of environmental dangers, and more recently British scientists discovered the hole in the ozone layer. We should be in the vanguard of environmental protection in that last remaining, relatively unpolluted part of the globe—rather than be dragged along behind.

The Australian Government, with their practical record and mining experience, are not taking the initiative out of any starry-eyed idealism but in the realisation that unless action is taken there is a danger of irreparably damaging our planet for future generations. I challenge Conservative Members to put concern for the environment before profit for the mining companies. The Bill is an acid test of the Government's supposed commitment to green issues. If they press ahead with it, they will have failed that acid test.

8.11 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): As was said by my hon. Friend the Minister, the Antarctic treaty is a model of world co-operation. It has worked extremely well since 1961. It solved, for the time being, problems of territorial sovereignty, territorial integrity and territorial disputes. This evening, I shall discuss some of the convention's ramifications.

Antarctica is a marvellous laboratory for the study of global phenomena. Among them are the ozone layer—and let us not forget the British scientists who discovered the hole in the ozone layer—and global atmospheric warming. If the entire Antarctic ice cap melts, sea levels around the world will rise by 150 metres. Antarctica is a uniquely favourable site from which to study the magnetosphere, which is that part of the ionosphere most affected by solar storms and which has such a bad effect on radio communications.

Geological and geophysical investigations lead to a greater understanding of the refinement of plate tectonic processes that remain active. The southern ocean is of global importance in respect of its behaviour as a major sink, particularly for carbon dioxide, for which the estimated uptake is of the order of 30 per cent. of that discharged into the atmosphere.

In addition, there are biological studies into stocks of krill, fish and squid. I quote from the publication, "Antarctica 2000," which is the Natural Environment Research Council's strategy for Antarctic research. Section 9 on page 3 describes the Antarctic ice sheet:

"The ice sheet presents unparalleled scope for the study of past climate and environmental conditions extending back to possibly one million years BP. Isotopic ratios of oxygen and hydrogen within the frozen water molecule are diagnostic of palaeotemperatures; acids and insoluble particulate matter indicate periods of volcanic activity; gas bubble pressures assist in estimating the former elevation of the ice sheet, whilst the included gas provides insight into the composition of the Earth's ancient atmosphere. The analysis of ice cores also traces the inexorable rise of CO_2 and other gases such as methane, nitrous oxides, other oxides of nitrogen and sulphur since pre-industrial times, some of which contribute to the greenhouse effect. In addition, heavy metals such as copper, lead, zinc and cadmium can be measured to levels of picograms per gram. Ice core chemistry of this sensitivity is thus able to monitor changes in the global background levels of these chemicals, which are transferred to Antarctica by atmospheric circulation."

In order to put some flesh on those bones, I may add that my brother worked for the British Antarctic Survey for five years and spent nearly three years on-station in Antarctica. His was an object lesson in the work done by the survey in measuring world pollution levels. The survey knows full well that, at a certain depth in the ice sheet, one can recover samples of snow that fell hundreds of years ago, and do so very precisely. In that way, one can identify the level of a particular pollutant 100 years ago and its level today. Antarctica is the only place in the world where it is possible to do that.

Following ratification of the Antarctic treaty in 1961, three additional legal instruments emerged, which together form the Antarctic treaty system. They are the agreed measures for the conservation of Antarctic flora and fauna of 1964; the conservation of Antarctic seals in 1972; and the convention on the conservation of Antarctic marine-living resources. I mention them in detail because they were the forerunners of the convention on the regulation of Antarctic mineral resource activities, which is what all the fuss is about.

We have a strong voice in the British Antarctic Survey which, since 1961, has undertaken an integrated and coherent programme of first-class research. It is worth listening to the survey's views, but now I quote from a letter from Greenpeace. I thank Greenpeace for writing to me and appreciate the trouble that it has taken. The letter comes to me from Mr. Dougie Patel, Antarctica campaigner, who writes:

"given the unresolved issue of sovereignty in Antarctica, very few if any operators would have risked investment in exploration and development without a clear legal system for licensing and some security for realising their investment."

That point has already been made, but it is complete nonsense. Any nation deciding to exploit Antarctica's world resources—if they are there to exploit—might decide that it would keep the oil for its own use. One can imagine the Soviet Union, for example, getting up the oil and taking it back to Russia, not for resale but for its own use. In that case, arguments about a "clear legal system" are nonsense, for who is to enforce such a system? Mr. Patel continues:

"This Bill commits"—

note the use of the word "commits"—

"the UK to accept future mineral exploitation of Antarctica by other nations, even in UK claimed territory".

The Bill does no such thing. Mr. Patel adds:

"In effect Parliament is being asked to commit the UK to support an Antarctic mining regime without the opportunity for full debate on the future consequences of our ratification of the Convention."

That, too, is nonsense. I suspect that Mr. Patel has not read the explanatory and financial memorandum, which states:

"The Bill prohibits any activities in Antarctica for, or for purposes connected with, the exploration or exploitation of mineral resources, except prospecting activities authorised by the United Kingdom Government or by another State which is party to the Convention."

In other words, Mr. Patel has made an assumption about the Bill, and has taken it to be the truth.

Mr. Patel goes on to comment on the position of Australia and France. On Australia, he says:

"Prime Minister Bob Hawke has declared that his Government will not sign CRAMRA."

That is true so far: the Australians have not signed the convention, and I feel that we are entitled to ask what factors are at work there. Can the reason be the rise of the green factor in Australia, or perhaps the fact that that

[Mr. Hugo Summerson]

nation has long exploited its own primary mineral resources? Can Australia be looking across the southern ocean towards Antarctica, hoping to apply its expertise there? As for the French, they can hardly talk; driving a new airstrip across Antarctica hardly presents a good example to the rest of the world.

Belgium currently has a Bill going through its Parliament which will make it illegal for any Belgian national to prospect for or exploit any minerals in Antarctica. Bully for Belgium, I say. How ridiculous: such a law would be completely unenforceable.

Finally, Mr. Patel says:

"Or the UK can choose to open up a truly pristine wilderness for minerals mining. Any participation in a policy of burning more fossil fuels demonstrates that the UK Government has not yet made the commitment to develop, (or encourage others to develop) alternatives to fossil fuels and to mitigate the process of global warming."

I need only mention the two words "nuclear power", which, of course, will drive anyone from Greenpeace completely insane.

Why is there a need for the convention? It would decide in advance whether the risks are acceptable. The procedure gives the benefit of the doubt to the protection of the environment—otherwise, as my hon. Friend the Minister has said, there is the strong possibility of an unregulated scramble for the Antarctic's resources.

The importance of the convention is shown by the fact that the treaty's consultative parties took six years to reach agreement in Wellington on 2 June 1988. At present there is only a voluntary moratorium, and if agreement is not reached that may go by the board.

Let us consider the resources of the Antarctic. It must be remembered that only 1 or 2 per cent. of its land mass is above ice; most of it is covered by a sheet of ice up to 5 km deep. To the best of my knowledge, the technology is not available for the process of drilling through the ice to the rock beneath to be possible. It should also be borne in mind that the ice is constantly on the move.

The Americans say that they reckon that Antarctica's continental shelf has oil reserves amounting to 45 billion barrels. That is nonsense. The continental shelf is comparatively small; moreover, the formation of the continental ice sheet has meant that the sediments normally deposited to form oil and gas have not been produced. The American assessment is pure fantasy—nor are the technology and resources available for coal, copper or any other mineral to be obtained in such inimical conditions.

The Antarctic treaty has worked well, but it can continue to work only if it is supported by the consultative parties. My final word is that Australia and France should think twice about the effects that their refusal to ratify the convention will have on the future of the treaty.

8.23 pm

Dr. John Gilbert (Dudley, East): I am deeply suspicious of the way in which Her Majesty's Government have reached their own decision on this matter. As I understand it, they have had singularly little discussion with non-governmental organisations that are quite properly concerned about environmental matters. I am also told that the United Kingdom delegation in Auckland did not include a single representative from the Nature Conservancy Council or any other non-governmental organisation—or, for that matter, from the Department of the Environment, although, given the way in which the Department is run nowadays, that might be a blessing. The Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Energy were represented throughout, as well as the Foreign Office. It is clear that there is a good deal going on about which the Minister has not come clean.

My suspicions are heightened by the Minister's statement that the Bill will regulate what goes on. He must know that—as has been made clear by my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and many others—any regime that permits prospecting must envisage the ultimate possibility of exploitation; otherwise there would be no point in prospecting.

The Minister is an amiable fellow, and I know that he is intelligent enough at least to understand that point. He says that the Bill permits prospecting, but he does not say how many people will be allowed to prospect. Will it be on a gold rush scale? The Minister also said that drilling would be permitted only down to 25 m, which he hoped would reassure us that things would not be too bad. Unfortunately, it appears that he has not even read clause 2 of his own Bill. Subsection (2) states:

"'prospecting activities' includes field observations, geological, geochemical and geophysical investigations, the use of remote sensing techniques and the collection of samples, but does not include . . . drilling to depths exceeding 25 metres or such other depth as the Commission may determine".

There is nothing to say that the limit must be 25 m; the Commission may determine a limit of 50, 75 or 100 m on any day of the week.

The Minister said that a complete ban on mineral exploitation was impossible to achieve, and let it slip that it had been tried throughout the 1970s. For his information, in less than six months' time we shall be moving into the 1990s. In the 1970s, people had hardly heard of the ozone layer, and they certainly did not know that there were any holes in it. They were not as concerned about environmental matters then. The Prime Minister had not even heard of the Green party in 1970; she was still going around taking children's milk away from them.

It is absurd to pretend that public opinion throughout the world has not moved on since the 1970s. The Minister frowns and shakes his head. If he really believes that public opinion has not moved on since then, I do not know what world he has been living in. Public opinion—not only in this country but in the United States, western Europe and Japan—has moved on dramatically in the past decade on many different environmental issues, and I see no reason why Her Majesty's Government should not at least attempt to see whether a complete ban on mineral exploitation may not still be feasible.

Unlike the Minister, I am informed that the French Government's position on the convention is clear, but we shall see who turns out to be right in the event. I certainly endorse what was said by the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson): I think that there is more than a little hypocrisy in the French Government's attitude, given that they are already conniving at the defiling of the Antarctic environment with the airstrip that the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

I am concerned about the phrase "significant adverse effects" which appears in the convention. Nowhere do I see it defined, and it is an extremely elastic phrase, which could

mean all things to all men. It would be helpful if the Minister could define it for us, as he has not done so yet —although, to be fair to him, he talked about the various categories of adverse effect.

In that connection, let me again echo the hon. Member for Walthamstow by quoting an article written last year by Miss Cassandra Phillips of *World Wildlife Fund News*. It states:

"The operations would have to be based on the narrow coastal areas which are ice-free for part of the year, and which comprise only about 2 per cent. of the total land area. Some of these refuges are already overcrowded with scientific research stations, and they are also the areas used by the vast breeding colonies of penguins and seals."

My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley drew attention to the possibility of oil spills. I am sure he does not believe that we shall see super-tankers cruising in that part of the world. But a nasty accident could occur with a small survey ship, or there could be the sort of accident we saw at Spitsbergen recently with a major cruise liner. Cruising activities are becoming more popular in that part of the world. Even without hitting another ship, a modern liner can run into an iceberg.

I do not believe that in the northern hemisphere there has been an accident giving rise to a severe pollution problem. In the southern hemisphere, however, the air and sea currents are different. There, any pollution is less likely to be dispersed, which is one reason why we have the ozone effect over the south pole rather than over the north pole. Any clean-up operations down there would be extremely difficult.

The Bill gives the Government powers over United Kingdom nationals and companies, but I am not sure where they can exercise those powers. Will they be constrained to exercise them purely in the territories claimed by the United Kingdom, or will they be able to roam all over the Antarctic seeking to enforce the provisions of this measure and of any licences granted by Her Majesty's Government?

Equally, if the convention comes into effect and other countries, such as Argentina and France, sign it and appoint inspectors, will they have inspectors running all over British Antarctic territories trying to enforce regulations against their citizens and nationals wherever they might be prospecting throughout the Antarctic territories?

What powers would our inspectors or the inspectors of any other signatory states have over companies not incorporated in any of those signatory states? It appears that there could be completely open hunting for a company that incorporated itself, for example, in Luxembourg or in some other tax haven and then engaged in prospecting—or any other activities for that matter—in that part of the world. The Bill is probably a model for the sort of legislation that other countries are being invited to pass. It seems that it will be powerless to deal with such a situation.

I endorse the views of the Australian Government. I do not want to see any prospecting or any mineral activity in the southern ocean. The Minister is being defeatist in saying that what was not possible in the 1970s cannot be attempted in the 1990s. Antarctica needs to be placed under United Nations trusteeship and the whole area—land, water and the continental shelf—should be policed by a United Nations agency.

8.33 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I do not want to ruin an illustrious future career on the Opposition Front Bench for the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), but I wish to extend to him my deepest sympathy for having to move, with such discomfiture, an amendment which shows that the Labour party is hoist on its own petard.

The Opposition amendment is, sadly, a false prospectus, for reasons that I will describe. Also, it is clear from the remarks that the hon. Gentleman made at the outset of his speech, when trying to garner support for the about-turn by the Labour party—praying in aid comments made in the other place—just how difficult his task was. But I give him credit for doing it with great bravado and a degree of panache.

I will describe the problems that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley had and how he tried to get round them. He quoted some remarks made by Lord Buxton of Alsa in the other place and said that the noble Lord had said on Second Reading on 20 April that he supported the Bill without enthusiasm. That was true, but the hon. Gentleman omitted to quote from the noble Lord's speech, or had failed to see, a point that the House might find illuminating. Discussing the Bill, Lord Buxton said:

"I welcome the Bill because it probably provides the only hope"—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 20 April 1989; Vol. 506, c.934.]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I draw the attention of the hon. Member to the fact that he should not quote directly from the *Official Report* of the other place. Perhaps he can paraphrase the passage he has in mind.

Mr. Burns: I am grateful to you for giving me that advice, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was not aware of the rule.

Lord Buxton welcomed the Bill because, he said, it was the best measure possible in the circumstances of human nature. That is different from suggesting that he did not like the Bill and that he supported it without enthusiasm. I agree that it was without enthusiasm, but that was because he was a realist and understood human nature.

The Labour Leader in the other House, Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos, also welcomed the Bill. In addition, he congratulated the Government and their officials on agreeing the convention and assured their Lordships' House that he would do all he could to assist the Bill to have a swift passage. We can appreciate from those remarks the problems that faced the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley.

That brings us to the Opposition amendment. To be charitable, one might say that it is littered with mistakes and inaccuracies because Labour Members were too quick in trying to get it tabled so as to cover their tracks. The amendment says:

"That this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which fails to take account of major changes since the signing of the Convention".

"What a difference a day makes," in the words of the song. But what a difference an amendment makes in merely three months, since Lord Cledwyn promised his support for the Bill. To the best of my knowledge, there has been no signing of the convention. It was adopted on 2 June, but there has not been a signing. That is mistake number one.

Next, the amendment talks about taking

[Mr. Burns]

"account of major changes . . . including the Exxon . . . disaster".

The Exxon disaster took place at Easter time this year, almost a month before Lord Cledwyn's promise of support for the Bill.

The amendment goes on to talk about

"increased public concern about ozone depletion and the greenhouse effect".

The Prime Minister as long ago as September last year spoke of the important environmental issues and problems facing this country and the world and raised the whole problem of the ozone layer. She held a conference at No. 10 Downing street in March of this year, probably two months before Lord Cledwyn promised his support for the Bill.

The amendment goes on to talk about

"opposition to signing the Convention by the governments of Australia and France".

We have discovered from the Minister's remarks tonight that France has not yet publicly declared its position, although Australia has declared its interest, so I congratulate the Opposition on getting right one out of six points in the amendment.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a statement by the French Prime Minister followed by a similar statement by the French President should be enough to convince him, if not the Minister, that it is the view of the French Government?

Mr. Burns: I understand the hon. Gentleman's problems. He is clutching at straws in an effort to restore the credibility of the Opposition's amendment. However, the Minister announced today that up to this moment the French have not made an announcement about their intentions. That assurance is good enough for me.

The Bill is of far greater significance than the number of hon. Members who are in the Chamber would suggest. Its ramifications are significant. They will affect the Antarctic and the rest of the world. It is important that the Bill should be passed so that the convention on the regulation of Antarctic mineral resource activities can be ratified. The Bill is a far-ranging environmental protection measure. It will prohibit mineral prospecting activities in Antarctica by British companies and nationals, apart from prospecting activities that are authorised by the United Kingdom Government. That displays a great degree of foresight.

Although interest in the desire economically to exploit minerals in the area is negligible at present, that may not always be the case. Although traces of a wide range of hard rock minerals have been found in Antarctica, none has been found in amounts that would merit serious commercial interest. However, what is not known is whether any hydrocarbon resources exist in economically interesting amounts. Without the protective measures that are provided for in the convention and the Bill, there could be a free-for-all that would greatly damage the environment and the ecological balance of the Antarctic. That is why the Bill displays great foresight and is an important insurance policy for the protection of the future of that region.

I welcome the fact that under article 3 of the convention no mineral resource activities may take place, except those specifically authorised. That procedure is further strengthened under article 13 which prevents mineral resource activities in any area that is designated as a specially protected area or as a site of special scientific interest, or in any other area that is designated by the convention as a protected area because of its historic, ecological, environmental or other values. All the checks and balances on mineral resource activity are weighted in favour of environmental protection. I warmly welcome the fact that in every case the interests of the environment will be put first and will be given the benefit of the doubt, if any doubt exists. To my mind, that is an extremely important safeguard. It will have serious ramifications, in that effectively it will ensure the genuine environmental protection that all of us, I believe, passionately desire should be provided for the area.

I know that there is a school of thought that believes that there should be a total ban on mineral resource activities, or a turning of the Antarctic into a world park. In reality, neither proposition would be workable, even if the latter proposition were desirable. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) cared to listen instead of shouting from a sedentary position, he would have the benefit of the knowledge that I am about to impart to him.

Attempts to negotiate such a ban failed on five different occasions between 1972 and 1979. That is a powerful enough example of how a ban would not work. If time after time agreement cannot be reached, there is no point in continuing to hit one's head against a brick wall. The present convention took seven years of hard slog to negotiate. Failure to ratify it would lead to a dangerous and damaging free-for-all, which would leave the Antarctic at the mercy of irresponsible prospectors from all over the world who would not give a fig for the damage that they might do to the environment. They would be in the Antarctic for purely selfish reasons—to try to maximise the amount of money that they could get from successful mineral prospecting.

Similarly, I share the Government's view that to give the Antarctic a new designation as some sort of world park would not protect the environment. It must be borne in mind, as an argument against the creation of a world park, that the Antarctic treaty has worked effectively for over a quarter of a century. It would not be wise to go down a path that we do not know. That is what we would do if we adopted that course of action.

I congratulate the Government on the speed with which they have introduced the Bill. I trust and hope that the other nations that have an interest in the Antarctic will pass similar legislation so that the convention can be ratified as soon as possible, notwithstanding the problems that we have with Australia. The Bill will be an important step towards providing further protection for the environment of that region. It will be welcomed by all reasonable people, who see the need for such a measure.

8.47 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The analysis given by the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) of the relevant position of the Labour party in this House and the other place is of some passing interest, but for him to have to resort to the arguments that he used when he criticised the amendment moved by the hon.

Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) showed that his case is as thin as some parts of the ozone layer over the Antarctic.

The Minister said that this was a technical measure, but according to the arguments used in the debate, it is a technical measure of considerable significance. The point which is at the heart of the debate is the Government's assertion that the Bill relates only to prospecting. In a technical sense, that may be true. However, as the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) said so clearly, no company or nation will embark on prospecting just for the sake of prospecting: they will do so only if they can see an ultimate end in sight. Perhaps, many years from now, the House will be presented with yet another Bill to take us one step closer to that end, which is the development of Antarctica's mineral resources.

Even if we accept that the Bill is designed purely to allow for prospecting, those activities will lead to many onshore activities. Pollution will result from the disposal of waste. The number of prospecting activities is not spelled out. Those activities could proliferate. The Minister has not said anything about the extent of the prospecting activities and their pollution consequences.

Extensive use is made of drilling muds in the North sea. Drilling in Antarctica might involve similar materials, which could lead to a limited or even to a large amount of pollution.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does my hon. Friend not acknowledge that the temperature in the Antarctic is such that, almost inevitably, prospecting companies would have to use oil-based rather than water-based muds and that that would increase the pollution risk in ways that cannot now be envisaged?

Mr. Wallace: My hon. Friend has considerable expertise in North sea oil matters. I accept his point, which the Minister did not address.

The question has been raised as to what would happen if there were no regulation. In some respects that is the best argument that has been presented, but it appeared to be something of a scare story. As I said in an earlier intervention, it is quite clear from the activities and the policies of oil companies that they look for areas of political stability before investing substantial sums of money on which they expect a return. I do not believe for one moment that they would invest vast sums of money in an area where they feared that there was not that stability and where there were arguments about sovereignty.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) said that the Soviet Union might set up a drilling base and take the oil back to the Soviet Union. Of course, a national Government are in a different position from a company, but the Soviet Union was not one of the countries that claimed territorial sovereignty in Antarctica, and it was an early signatory to the Antarctica treaty. Given its history of dealing with the area, it would be very loth to take a provocative stance in asserting mineral right claims. That argument was something of a red herring.

Enforcement is a very important issue. For some comparison, I looked at the eighth report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution published in 1981, which dealt with oil spillages at sea. It considered the problems of controlling oil pollution at sea. There had been some suggestion that the North sea should be designated a special area to help enforcement procedures. In paragraph 7.83, the report reached this conclusion:

"The problem is not the standards set . . . for discharges to European waters, but the possibility of enforcing them. More stringent requirements would not reduce the latter problem: indeed, the experience in the Mediterranean shows the limited value of more stringent requirements while waste disposal facilities in ports are lacking, and the ability to deter offenders is poor."

The report continued:

"There are two aspects to this problem. The first, which we considered, Chapter VII, is the jurisdictional difficulty arising in dealing with vessels which for the most part travel outside territorial waters, and which are often not registered in the UK. The second, which we consider below, is the practical difficulties of detecting an offence and securing a successful prosecution."

I accept that there are some differences between mobile vessels and stations in Antarctica, but the main issue is the same: if it is impossible to try and enforce pollution control in the pond of the North sea, how in the world will we ever properly enforce it in the vast continent of Antarctica?

We are told that clause 8 makes provision for inspectors, so we can assume that the inspectors will be trying to enforce it. The paragraph of the explanatory and financial memorandum which deals with manpower states:

"The Bill is unlikely to have a significant effect on public sector manpower. Depending on the number and timing of licence applications, it is anticipated that the necessary administration will be carried out by existing staff. Inspectors and observers will be appointed on an ad hoc basis but are unlikely to be needed for some years or in great numbers."

So they will not be appointed for some time, and when they are appointed it will be on an ad hoc basis. That does not appear to be a regime that would sensibly or effectively enforce proper environmental consideration.

Mr. Summerson: Is it not quite clear that an inspector will be appointed when a licence is granted?

Mr. Wallace: My point is clear from the explanatory notes. It is not envisaged that there will be a vast army of inspectors who will be appointed only on an ad hoc basis. Given the vast square miles of the Antarctic continent, it does not appear that that will be an effective means of enforcing environmental control.

What is meant by "significant damage"? The hon. Member for Walthamstow referred to what the French did last year in blasting a wildlife area to make a hard runway. As far as I am aware, little has been done in response to that. Even the present enforcement cannot be accepted as entirely satisfactory.

The protection of the environment is of paramount consideration in Antarctica. Hon. Members on both sides of the House agree that, as it has been undisturbed for so many years, it is almost an ideal place to test pollution and to make comparisons which are not possible in other parts of the world: the hole in the ozone layer was discovered by British scientists over Antarctica. But even with the best will in the world, we cannot exclude the possibility of an accident. Even a very tight regime enforcing control cannot exclude an accident. An Argentine tanker hit rocks near Palmer Station south of Cape Horn only last year and caused an oil spill. The Exxon Valdez caused tremendous damage to the ecosystem in the Arctic. Those risks cannot be excluded, even with a properly enforced environmental protection regime. Therefore, we should not take the risk of moving towards prospecting and development.

[Mr. Wallace]

As for timing, in an intervention in the Minister's speech, the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) pointed out that prospecting would not take place for a considerable time. That point is echoed in the explanatory memorandum reference to manpower. If it will not happen for a long time, what would be lost by withdrawing the Bill? If Australia does not sign the convention, the Bill will be defunct anyway. We have time to try to achieve something more worth while. I cannot accept that, because it was impossible to reach agreement in the 1970s, it will be impossible to reach agreement in the 1990s. The right hon. Member for Dudley, East expressed that far more clearly.

In 1972, the Minister was the chairman of the Cambridge university Conservative association. So much has happened since then. The following year there was great speculation as to whether the price of petrol would reach 50p a gallon. The world has changed enormously since then. We have become much more aware of the environmental conditions and the damage which man's activities can do to the atmosphere. That sensitivity has prompted the Australian Government to take the stand that they have, and the French Government to show signs of doing the same.

A comprehensive environmental protection policy would be far more easily achieved today than it was in the 1970s. We should make the effort. We should not allow the failures of the past to distract us from trying to achieve some success for the future. I do not believe that future generations will thank us if, having kept one part of our planet still relatively intact, we embarked upon a course of action that would ruin it.

8.58 pm

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): I welcome the Bill. I share the fears about the environmental horrors that could result if we do not have controls and constraints. We must pay great attention to that part of the world which, fortunately, has been preserved largely intact without great damage to its systems. I share the Opposition's worries about possible developments but, unlike the Opposition and Greenpeace, I believe that the Bill's proposals and the convention are steps towards bringing, rather than reducing, control. Greenpeace is utopian in wishing for a quick agreement on a world environmental park, perhaps under the control of the United Nations. Over the past few years, we have had a treaty that has enabled reasonable control to be maintained. The Bill, which underlines the convention, strengthens that treaty's effects and we should support it for that reason.

It is all very well people saying that in an ideal world we should be able to get everyone everywhere to agree that there will be no exploitation of resources in Antarctica. In the difficult world of international relations, it is vital to achieve consensus, such as that achieved during the work on the convention. As one of my colleagues rightly said, during the 1970s there were several attempts to have a moratorium on any form of mineral exploitation. Those attempts failed. Six or seven years had to elapse before the convention was achieved.

I hope that our work does not stop and that we will proceed with Australia, France and other countries—in the hope that they are not being hypocritical—towards achieving absolute bans on mineral extraction. That is my preference, but we have a convention now. We should take what agreement has been reached rather than cast it aside and say that we want a utopia that is not immediately realisable.

I have heard the comments about prospecting and the suggestion that people will not prospect until they see a possibility of exploitation, but that argument can be used both ways. Any major company that thought that there was a prospect of mineral exploitation would be optimistic if it thought that it could therefore justify spending substantial sums on prospecting. I do not think that there will be significant prospecting activity in Antarctica, although, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, it may be difficult to distinguish between prospecting and research, which is a legitimate activity. We could get into an enormous muddle if, while imposing a blanket ban on prospecting, we tried to inhibit legitimate research activities.

I am not concerned about the prospecting option that is left in the Bill, which can apply only with the permission of the United Kingdom Government. After all, unless there is an assurance that companies can develop the Antarctic prospecting possibilities, why should they go ahead? That opening avoids the complications that could arise from scientific research. Prospecting is not the threat to the Antarctic environment that the Opposition have suggested.

I welcome the Bill because it provides much-longed-for controls on mineral exploitation in the Antarctic. It is a major step towards preventing mineral exploitation and it should be welcomed by the House.

9.4 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): The House is trying to find the best way of protecting one of the last unspoilt wildernesses on the planet, so I am sorry that some hon. Members have tried to turn the debate into a knockabout. I accept that, if we can get only certain kinds of agreements, we should participate and try to get the best Bill that we can. That is why Labour peers in the other place participated, negotiated and tried to be constructive. However, it has become apparent that there is a distinct likelihood that the agreement could fail because some states may boycott it. If that is the case, it is reasonable for the Government to re-examine the matter and try to take a different view.

As one hon. Member has said, the ideal would be to protect the Antarctic from any mineral exploitation. I do not accept that we are talking only about investigation and that it is a low risk. When firms and various people go to the Antarctic and take samples and conduct tests, drilling and boring there will be disturbance, damage and risks. An oil spillage occurred last year from the Argentine ship that was carrying supplies to a scientific base. The worst damage was caused by the spillage of diesel fuel that it was carrying for generators on the base. If people begin to prospect in the Antarctic, we must supply them with materials. They are normally supplied by sea. Because of the Exxon incident, we know the risks, no matter how careful or regulated the movements are.

We do not have the same intense sunlight as that in the Antarctic, nor do we have the high rise and fall of tides or the same wind patterns. Spills of oil and various wastes, including human waste, do not biodegrade to the same

extent as they do in the northern hemisphere. They can be left there for years without changing. If we looked round the Antarctic hard enough, we could probably dig up tins of corned beef that were taken there by Captain Scott's expedition. They have not been broken down or degraded at all. They will lie there, almost for ever.

The Antarctic is a terribly fragile ecosystem. We do not fully understand the importance of the Antarctic to the well-being of the planet. For example, we do not understand how important it is to weather patterns or how it influences the rest of the hemisphere. We do not fully understand the movement of krill and plankton in Antarctic waters and their roles in the food chain throughout the southern or northern hemispheres. However, we know how important the Antarctic is to various species of birds and marine mammals, many of which are unique to the area.

To exploit the Antarctic we require sea ports that are ice-free for part of the year and some land on which to drill and work. Those very areas have most wildlife, such as penguin rookeries, sea bird colonies and seal breeding areas. We want to protect those areas.

I accept that there has been a genuine attempt to build in the best possible safeguards but, with the best will in the world, there will inevitably be accidents, pollution and environmental damage. There is no way that we can legislate for that.

Mr. Wood: I sympathise with a number of the points that the hon. Gentleman has made, but would it not be better to agree a convention and have legislation to back it up and then to proceed to further controls, rather than trying to achieve further controls while refusing to sign the convention?

Mr. Morley: I do not agree. Even if we agreed a convention, how would we impose the safeguards once firms started to go to the Antarctic to prospect? Firms will not go there and commit their money for nothing. It will be the thin end of the wedge—the beginning of the rape of Antarctica. Firms will go there not for the good of the environment but to get something out of it. If we are that desperate to find minerals to exploit, we are scraping the barrel. It would be better for the Government to encourage the multinationals to start looking for alternative means of energy replacement. Instead of putting their money into non-renewable sources, they should put it into research and development of renewable sources. That is the way forward, not opening up the Antarctic for exploitation.

It appears that we have reached a deadlock. We have talked about the difficulties in negotiating arrangements for a world park. That being so, what difficulties would there be in agreeing mineral exploitation in the British sector? The Government will have to negotiate with Argentina and Chile. That is hardly the basis for easy or successful negotiations to limit mineral exploitation. Surely it would be better to negotiate for a world park, and perhaps to hand the whole thing over to the United Nations and negotiate a convention to deal with all the conflicting demands. I hope that the Government will take a lead in arguing for the protection of Antarctica and a world park.

9.10 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I apologise for not having been here for the first part of the Minister's speech, although I got the sense of his remarks from the second part of his speech.

Mr. Foot: The first half was better.

Mr. Corbyn: My right hon. Friend tells me that the first half was better.

I support the amendment. *[Interruption.]* I shall not rise to that piece of muddy old bait.

When history starts to examine the growth of concern about the environment in the 1970s and 1980s, people will surely ask, "Was it right and was it necessary to consider every piece of land and every corner of the earth as a place that could be exploited for minerals?" Perhaps people will say that this was the turning point, at which society as a whole began to realise that it could not go on exploiting every place on earth for oil, gas, coal, diamonds and uranium. Ultimately the process is self-defeating because of the damage that it causes to the environment. We are already beginning to realise that about the rain forests, and I hope that, as a matter of urgency, we shall realise it about Antarctica.

The Antarctic treaty represented a step forward because it meant a halt to the developments that might have taken place at the time. It was introduced because people recognised the difficulty of controlling any development in Antarctica. The tiny number of people in Antarctica already give rise to a serious pollution problem. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) pointed out, there are two sorts of climates that are not conducive to biodegradability. They are extreme desert conditions and extreme cold. Virtually intact mummified bodies have been found in the Sahara and the deserts of northern Chile after 1,000 or 2,000 years because the climate has been so stable. The problem in Antarctica is that human and other waste does not biodegrade as it does in more temperate climates. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe said, during his expedition in 1957 Sir Vivian Fuchs reached Scott's various bases and opened and ate some tins of corned beef that had been exported in 1912. I do not know whether he suffered from salmonella or botulism, but I know that he found the food perfectly preserved.

There is considerable waste from the scientific bases. There is human waste, food waste and spilt diesel fuel, which cause enormous damage. We must recognise that any exploitation, whether in the form of survey work or exploration for possible mineral deposits, will create a problem. Only 2 per cent. of the land mass of the Antarctic is ice-free and that is the crucial area for breeding grounds of many birds and various migratory species, yet that is the very place where companies will seek to put their bases.

If the Bill goes through and if exploration licences are granted, there will be a serious environmental problem, which we must examine. I will give a simple example which I am sure that others have used. An oil spill took place in the Alaskan oilfield which caused the most enormous damage, not only because of delays in cleaning it up, but because of its remoteness, the extreme temperatures and the difficulties of access to that region. If an oil spill took place in the Antarctic, especially in the water as the ice cap was expanding, the oil could flow under the ice and quickly cover thousands of square miles. The oil might never go

[Mr. Corbyn]

away. Those who ask why it matters, as it would affect only a few fish here and there, should realise that whenever one species is destroyed, we are destroying part of the sustainable life of the earth. We should think more seriously about the Antarctic and not see it merely as a potential goldmine for various oil companies.

The Minister said that he wanted to preserve the Antarctic, that he did not want it to suffer environmental damage and that he was keen on environmental protection generally. However, he then said that that was why the exploitation of minerals in the Antarctic would be controlled by restricting the licences granted to oil companies. Surely to god, if a number of nations can get together, sign the Antarctic treaty and agree on various measures, they must also agree that any exploitation is dangerous and likely to cause pollution. Surely they should support the welcome change in the Australian Government's position to support for the idea of a world park. I hope that New Zealand and other countries will also support the Australian Government's idea. Why cannot we say that we recognise that the Antarctic is an important wilderness and that we support the idea of a world park? The idea that to control the exploitation there is a pragmatic protection of the world park is unconvincing. Pressure comes from the oil companies and the exploiters of mineral resources around the world, who are trying to get their hands on the Antarctic.

I hope that the House will support the Opposition amendment. If the Bill as drafted is given a Second Reading, we shall continue the arguments in Committee and I hope that I shall be a member of that Committee so that I shall be able to continue those arguments. We will continue to argue for the preservation of the Antarctic as a world park. I also agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe that, at a later stage, the Antarctic could be handed over to an international agency, such as the United Nations, so that it does not become the property of a nation state, which could hand parts of it over to companies such as Exxon and BP, or any other oil or mining company. Mining companies and exploitation companies do not go to the Antarctic to preserve the environment. They may be environmentally conscious, but I always remember the amount that the Central Electricity Generating Board spent on publicity to show that it was preserving bees alongside a nuclear power station. I am grateful to it for defending the habitat of those bees, but appalled by the nuclear power station and the pollution that comes from it.

Mr. Burns: What pollution?

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman may wish to divert me, and I would be happy to be diverted, but I think that you would stop me, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We must say that we do not support exploitation in the Antarctic. The Minister says that only exploration would be involved and that that is not necessarily exploitation, but why on earth would companies seek to find out how much coal, oil and minerals were there if they did not intend to mount an exploitation of those resources at a later stage?

Those who opposed the railway prospectors in the last century in north America and in this country because their proposals would cross their land did so because they knew that, once a route had been worked out, somebody would try to build that line. That is why people such as myself oppose road building plans. We know that as soon as the plans are drawn up, those roads will inevitably be built. Exactly the same process is involved now in relation to the Antarctic. If assessments are made of the mineral wealth there, and if minerals are discovered, the pressure will be on to exploit that mineral wealth.

It is time that we started looking at this a little differently. We should recognise the value to us of the information that we have gained from the Antarctic, such as the information about the problems with the ozone layer that were discovered by the British Antarctic Survey team. We should also recognise that we cannot continue to exploit the world's natural resources at the rate that we are at the moment. We must recognise the principle of sustainable development. We need to devote resources to recycling and to renewable sources of energy. Resources must be devoted to sustaining life and sustaining development instead of having this mad grab to exploit what is one of the last great wilderness areas of the world because if we exploit that area in the way in which this proposal will inevitably lead to there will be a disaster.

An awful lot of people all around the world are watching what is going on, not in the debates in this House, but in debates taking place about the Antarctic as a whole. People are genuinely concerned. They recognise that the rate at which we are exploiting the resources of this planet is unsustainable and that in the end it will cause disasters of various sorts. People recognise that every time that we destroy a plant or animal species, we are destroying some sustainability in our own life system.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) pointed out, temperate and tropical zones can recover from ecological disasters to some extent, but the environment cannot recover in Arctic or Antarctic conditions. We are in danger of causing irreversible disasters in the Antarctic if we allow oil exploitation to go ahead.

I hope that the House will turn its attention to this problem tonight and that it will support the Opposition amendment. I hope that we will succeed in saying that we, too, support the principle of a world park in the Antarctic and that we shall do everything that we can to persuade other countries to do the same. I hope that for once we will put the needs of our environment before the profit motives of large numbers of mineral companies all around the world.

9.22 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) spoke with sincerity and passion, but I hope that he will recognise that Opposition Members do not have a monopoly of concern about the environment or conservation. I hope that the entire House will agree that we are agreed on the end—on what we want the Antarctic to remain—and that we are divided only about the means.

It is not good enough to make grand unilateral gestures while ignoring the progress that has been based on quiet patient negotiations. I remind the hon. Member for Islington, North that those negotiations succeeded in producing the Antarctic treaty. However, no hon. Member has mentioned what it achieves in any detail. Article 1 of

the treaty dedicated the Antarctic to peaceful purposes only. Articles 1 and 5 demilitarised and denuclearised Antarctica. In articles 2 and 3 the signatories agreed not to press their conflicting views about territorial sovereignty in Antarctica and opened the way for freedom of scientific co-operation and research in Antarctica on a long-term basis. Article 9 provided that the essentially scientific and peaceful principles and objectives of the treaty were to be pursued at regular meetings.

The treaty was the result of years of patient negotiation. If we were to reject the Bill tonight and accepted the reasoned amendment tabled by the Opposition, we would be placing in jeopardy the similar efforts that have been made to regulate mineral exploitation in Antarctica, and that would be a potential disaster for the environment.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, although a step forward was made in the Antarctic treaty in terms of denuclearising Antarctica and making it a zone of peace, we are now saying, "Let us take another step and have no exploitation at all"? I and many of my hon. Friends believe that, if the Bill is passed in its current form, it will be a step backwards, because it will open the door to mineral exploitation of the Antarctic.

Mr. Leigh: I shall repeat what I said in my opening remarks. We are agreed on the ends, but were we to take the advice of the hon. Member for Islington, North to pursue unilateral action, I am convinced that, far from achieving his objective, we would put in jeopardy all that we have achieved after seven years of patient negotiations.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that, when opening the debate, my hon. Friend the Minister said that countries would refrain from mineral exploitation pending the timely entrance into this treaty. Therefore, were we unilaterally to reject that treaty and follow the path advocated by the hon. Member for Islington, North, we might put in jeopardy all that we have achieved, which has been much. For instance, the consulting parties under the Antarctic treaty negotiated the convention on Antarctic marine living resources, adopted in 1980, under which total allowable catches were allocated to countries wishing to fish in Antarctic waters. It is not good enough to say that all that we have achieved under the Antarctic treaty cannot be achieved under this convention.

As my hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) and for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) have made clear, it is important to put these matters into perspective and to recognise the enormous barriers that exist to the commercial exploitation of minerals in the Antarctic. As my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow also made clear in his pertinent remarks, it is important to recognise that a tiny percentage of the Antarctic land mass is capable of exploitation. Let us put the matters into perspective and recognise the progress that has been made after years of patient negotiation. Let us recognise, too, the fact that only prospecting will be allowed.

I do not believe that any hon. Member has yet detailed exactly what prospecting would mean if the treaty were to be signed. Prospecting would mean

"activities, including logistic support, aimed at identifying areas of mineral resource potential for possible exploitation and development, including geological, geochemical and geophysical investigations and field observations, the use of remote sensing techniques and collection of surface, seafloor and sub-ice samples. Such activities do not include dredging and excavations, except for the purpose of obtaining small-scale samples, or drilling, except shallow drilling into rock and sediment to depths not exceeding 25 metres . . . 'Exploration' means activities, including logistic support, aimed at identifying and evaluating specific mineral resource occurrences or deposits."

Therefore, prospecting would not include activities that could be said to be deleterious to the environment of Antarctica.

My hon. Friends have made it clear time and time again that, whatever we may want to achieve and whatever may be our ambitions for Antarctica, we must be realistic and conscious of what has been achieved and what has not been achieved in history. There are especially the five separate occasions in 1972, 1975, 1976, 1977 and 1979 when there was a failure to agree a moratorium on mineral exploitation.

I agree with Opposition Members that the proposal is not ideal, but politics, like international diplomacy, is the art of the possible. It would be a tragedy for Antarctica and for international co-operation, on which the future of Antarctica depends, if we took unilateral action and rejected the Bill.

9.28 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): This has been an important debate. Essentially the difference of opinion turns on the different judgments made by each side of the House on how the unique ecosystem of the Antarctic can best be preserved. We must decide whether it will be preserved by the Bill and the convention that it implements or by a bolder step, as now seems possible given the new demarche of the Australians and others.

This debate, valuable as it has been, would not have taken place in prime time had it not been for the Opposition and our concern for the environment. The Government appear to question who could criticise a carefully constructed compromise worked out over a number of years—an international convention that cannot be renegotiated. The convention, as the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) appeared to suggest, is the only show in town. The Government have urged, therefore, that we should support it.

The Government might argue that the issue was given a fair wind in the other place. In April my colleagues in the other place adopted a critical but accepting line to the Bill and it is reasonable to ask, as the hon. Member for Chelmsford has done, what has happened since then. The answer can be succinctly put by the Australian Foreign Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, who said:

"We believe in short that what might have seemed impossible—or unobtainable—a few years ago, or maybe even a few months ago, has really now come within reach of the possible."

We are talking about a wholly different set of circumstances. Although in April it could plausibly be argued that the Bill was the only possibility, now we are in a different position.

Mr. Burns: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Third Reading debate in the other place was on 8 June. Then the Opposition spokesmen did not say they opposed the Bill; they gave it the same support as they had given it on 20 April.

Mr. Anderson: In response to his textual analysis, the hon. Gentleman should be aware that, on Third Reading in the other place, the Leader of the Opposition asked

[Mr. Anderson]

about the new set of circumstances. In response Lord Glenarthur said that the Government were rather hesitant about what they called

"an unexpected turn of events."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 8 June 1989; Vol. 508, c. 945.]

The Government appeared to accept that there was a new set of circumstances. During this debate the least we could have hoped for was that the Government would not simply plough along the same furrow ploughed in April, but would recognise those different circumstances.

In the other place, the Minister said that they would want to discuss this matter in depth, but thus far there is no suggestion that the Government are ready to have such a discussion. They are simply fighting yesterday's battle when the fighting ground has moved on.

There are important reasons why the unease about this matter must be articulated and many of them have been deployed with great competence tonight by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Fundamental to this debate is the recognition that our generation will be called to account by successor generations on the state of the planet that we leave. Can we look future generations in the eye and say proudly that the convention is the best possible means of protecting the vast natural wilderness of the Antarctic from commercial pressures? Other hon. Members have already dealt with its fragile ecosystem, the danger of irreversible damage and the pressures on that 2 per cent. of its land mass that is not covered by ice.

Our amendment refers to the Exxon Valdez disaster. Despite all the technical expertise and competence available to the United States, it still suffered a vast spillage in Alaska causing so much damage. Imagine how much greater the damage would be in Antarctica because of the difficulty caused by the slow rate of biodegradation. If prospecting within the Antarctic were intensified there could be such a spill from a tanker or from a supply ship. If oil drilling were permitted in those stormy seas it would be difficult to avoid leaks. There is always the human factor, as was shown so tragically in the Exxon Valdez incident.

Mr. Summerson: It will not be possible to drill for oil in those seas. Down in the Antarctic the wind gets up to the highest rate in the world, the water freezes as it is blown off the top of the waves and is frozen by the time that it hits an oil rig, temperatures are so low that metal shears if a hammer is dropped and icebergs the size of the Principality of Wales come floating by. There is simply no prospect of oil rigs in the southern ocean.

Mr. Anderson: I hear the hon. Gentleman's arguments, but the same arguments were deployed 20 years ago about the North sea. Technology advances and as we move into a scenario where the price of oil may increase substantially and resources become depleted, there could well be pressures to search for new areas, regardless of all the technical difficulties involved.

Other concerns include the Government's motives. Indeed, they set out their motives with brutal frankness during the debate in another place on 20 April. Lord Glenarthur said:

"It has been our objective throughout the negotiation of the convention to ensure that the UK, as a claimant state in Antarctica, should have the largest possible share of any benefits from minerals activity within the British Antarctic territory."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 20 April 1989; Vol. 506, c. 929.]

That is the clear motive. There is no primacy to environmental considerations; it is a narrow, national commercial interest, set out with brutal frankness, to ensure that when the carve-up comes Britain has its piece of cake.

The prospecting defined in the Bill still rather assumes that it will lead to something else. The Government are not involved in an academic exercise or a scientific exploration for the good of mankind. Clause 2(1) states that clause 1 does not apply to purposes connected with

"the identification of suitable areas for the further exploration or the exploitation of mineral resources in this Act referred to as 'prospecting activities'".

It is clear that in that incremental process prospecting is considered to be but the start of it. We see that slippage easily, albeit with a possibility of a further debate if another convention is worked out—*[Interruption.]* There will be further pressures at that stage and it will be easy to move from one stage to another. It may be only prospecting now, but development is just further down the line.

It is said that prospecting means avoiding deep dredging and that there will be no drilling lower than 25 m. The whole problem of inspection has been set out by my hon. Friends. Essentially, the international authority sub-contracts to national Governments. It is difficult enough at local level for planning authorities to ensure that those to whom they give licences act within the ambit of those licences. Will countries have the motivation to ensure compliance with the licences? There is a real danger of collusion between national Governments and companies. For example, during the convention negotiations the parties refused to ban state subsidies for prospecting by the various companies. Do the countries have the resources adequately to monitor those activities?

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) said, during negotiations, environmental considerations, certainly within the British negotiating team, were given a low priority. The Nature Conservancy Council was not part of the team, nor was it adequately consulted. The Department of Energy and the Department of Trade and Industry were part of the team, but the Department of the Environment was not. Again, that suggests that narrow commercial motives rather than environmental considerations were paramount for the Government.

How, then, would the Government seek to restrain the multinationals? Clause 4 gives the power to revoke, vary or suspend licences, but insufficient attention is given to monitoring and compliance with the licence permission. There is a real danger of collusion, particularly when Governments are searching greedily for resources.

We recognise the ultimate dangers—the danger that there could be a new Klondyke in Antarctica and the dangers of military strife between powers because of uncertainty over existing claims and the unwillingness of many countries to accept the claims made by the countries that were first in on the act. But because of the current price levels of relevant minerals or the state of technology, there is no suggestion that countries are about to embark on serious developments. Therefore, there is no pressure on Governments to proceed with the convention now.

An international agreement is necessary and we accept that such an agreement is best pursued within the Antarctic treaty structure, not within the United Nations. But why the Government's haste?

The key question that I leave with the Government is this. Who can deny that new circumstances have now arisen as a result of the Australian Government's decision? The Minister's answer on that point was weak. The Australian Government, which must give its assent, effectively has a power of veto. Therefore, we are back at the starting gate. The convention will not be operative as long as the Australian Government maintain that veto with the possibility of being joined by other countries such as France.

In response to those new circumstances, the Minister could only say that the treaty system was based on compromise and mutual concerns so that a veto was not contemplated. In fact, a veto exists. Given the Australians' strongly held position, there is no way in which between now and October they will say that they have reconsidered the matter and now think that their original position was correct. That is not possible given the Australian temperament and the practicalities.

The Minister's second point was that Australia was wrong in principle and that he hoped that it would change its mind. It will not do so and the Government had better be clear that they are now in an entirely different ball game.

As I said at the beginning, Senator Gareth Evans's statement that events have now changed means that the Government should formulate a new position in the new circumstances. Faced with a convention that could open the way to mining, it is surely time to reflect afresh and to prolong the moratorium which has stood the test of time since 1977. We need to negotiate from scratch. It is clear that Australia will not sign the treaty. It is surely a pipe dream to say, as the Minister did, that, although Australia may technically not sign, it may nevertheless join the treaty. The Foreign Office had better get that idea out of their minds, because Australia will maintain its opposition and the convention as drafted will not be ratified. Australia is a major claimant state, with 42 per cent. of Antarctica's land mass.

We urge the Government to accede to our reasonable amendment. There is no urgency, because we know that at the 15th Antarctica consultative meeting in October Australia will propose the development of a comprehensive environmental protection convention. That proposal will be on the table, and the British Government had better start working out their response to it now.

There is nothing dishonourable about having second thoughts in changed circumstances, particularly if they are a pragmatic response to new realities. In no case have the Government appeared to take the initiative in a matter of importance relating to the environment, despite the Prime Minister's brave words last September. Here is a chance for the Government pragmatically to respond to new circumstances and to accept the Opposition amendment.

9.46 pm

Mr. Eggar: Concern has been expressed by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House about the need to protect Antarctica's environment. I welcome the nature of the debate, which generated sensible discussion about how best to achieve a common goal. I join the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) in paying tribute to Dr. John Heap, who heads the polar regions section of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. As the hon. Gentleman said, Dr. Heap was involved in every stage of the six years of negotiations on the treaty, and has been involved in matters relating to Antarctica for more than 25 years. He is recognised throughout the world as a leading expert in matters relating to Antarctica, and his dedication to the cause of preserving its environment is matched by many officials in the other states that are parties to the Antarctic treaty. It is right that we should recognise the work that they have done on behalf of us all for a long time.

The convention is not the product of a piratical or exploitative design by a series of rapacious mining companies. Nor is it the case, as has been implied by many Opposition Members, that the non-governmental organisations or the Department of the Environment were not involved in the United Kingdom's preparations for negotiations on the convention. The non-governmental organisations were consulted, and the Department was involved.

The convention is a supreme example of foresight of the need to protect the Antarctic environment, which first became evident in the 1960s. It also recognises the unique fragility of the Antarctic environment and that Antarctica could easily fall prey to those who have no respect for its environment but regard the continent only in terms of its potential mineral riches.

Mr. Summerson: I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that the Prime Minister of Malaysia is on record as saying, "I have heard that there is gold at the south pole, and I want a part of it."

Mr. Eggar: I am aware of those reported remarks, but that is one reason why this country believes in continuing with the present Antarctic treaty system—an approach which I note is supported by the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen, although not by a number of Opposition Back-Bench Members.

The convention would prevent mineral exploitation, except when it is agreed unanimously that such activity can proceed safely and without substantial risk to the environment. In short, the convention makes it very difficult to exploit Antarctica's mineral resources. There are those who say that it is biased. They are right: it is heavily biased in favour of protecting the Antarctic environment. The Opposition amendment shows no understanding of the objectives of the convention or, indeed, those of the Bill.

I agree with Opposition Members that the world is more concerned about environmental matters than it was even a year ago, but I think that they are making a fuss in a way that the Opposition in the Lords did not only a few weeks ago. It is the convention's primary objective to meet environmental concerns, including the desire to prevent disastrous environmental damage such as occurred in the Arctic from the accident involving the Exxon Valdez.

I have stressed that what we need in Antarctica is first-class scientific research such as has been carried out by the British Antarctic Survey. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson), who pointed out graphically how critical that work is. The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) also mentioned it. If we are to have first-class scientific

[Mr. Eggar]

research in Antarctica, however, we need peace and harmony in the region, and only if the Bill is passed and the convention ratified will that essential peace be assured. If the Bill is not passed the convention will not come into force, and we shall enter uncharted areas of uncertainty, not only with the convention but with the Antarctic treaty system as a whole.

The Government are always prepared to consider new initiatives for the protection of the Antarctic environment, and in doing so we shall of course take account of the views and interests of all our Antarctic treaty partners. An important element in environmental protection is that any proposal for mineral activity must go through a rigorous four-stage process, in which each state will have a veto on exploration and development. In other words—this point has been overlooked by Opposition Members—any state will be able to stop exploration and development.

Opposition Members have expressed some scepticism about the veto mechanism. I could go through the elaborate four-stage process step by step, but unfortunately time does not permit that. Let me assure Opposition Members, however, that this was extremely difficult to negotiate. The four-stage mechanism allows any one party to the treaty to veto at any of the four stages: thus states that wish to stop exploration and development can do so on their own and in their own capacity, without fear of being pressurised by other states—or by own companies. That process rules out the risk of a particular country's colluding with its nationals or its national companies to despoil the Antarctic. Frankly, it is surprising that Opposition Members should use that argument when they know that, if the convention does not come into force, then, and only then, will it be possible for individual states to collude—the word that they have used—with their nationals and companies.

The safeguards do not end there. Any proposal to explore or develop must pass the sufficiency of information test. That is the key element in the convention's environmental protection armoury. No activity at those stages can take place unless enough information is available to allow informed judgments to be made on what its environmental consequences will be. That applies as much to prospecting as to exploration and development.

In relation to prospecting, the state sponsoring the activity must vouch for the adequacy of information available to it. The commission set up under the convention can challenge the sponsoring state in that area. In relation to exploration and development, the advisory committee is specifically required to say whether adequate information exists.

The right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert), who is no longer in his place, asked about enforcement. Inspections by each state are possible anywhere in Antarctica. Any state can bring another state to the arbitration tribunal if it believes that that state has broken the rules. The arbitration tribunal can make urgent binding measures to protect the environment.

I assure the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), who was concerned about the role of inspectors and who asked whether the British Antarctic Survey would act as inspectors, should that be necessary from Britain's point of view, that that is not the case. It is the intention to appoint inspectors who are not associated with the BAS.

Many hon. Members have suggested that Antarctica should be designated as a world or wilderness park. My answer is that what matters is that activity in Antarctica should be in harmony with nature and should be carried out with due regard to the environmental consequences. The Antarctic treaty system has been committed to the protection of the Antarctic environment for nearly 30 years, long before Greenpeace came on to the scene.

The Government do not believe that sticking a label on the Antarctic would help to ensure its future. They do not believe that it is right to rule out the possibility that we might want to extract minerals at some time in the remote future. For those reasons, the Government believe that Antarctic environmental protection is best achieved by practical initiatives aimed at particular threats to nature.

It has been suggested that if the United Kingdom maintained its opposition to a complete ban on Antarctic mineral resource activity, we could find ourselves in the minority or even isolated. Our soundings of our partners in the treaty system do not support that assertion. The responses that we have had to specific inquiries show that the majority, including the United States, the Soviet Union, China, Brazil and seven other consultative parties, strongly support the entry into force of the convention. A minority, including France, have yet to make up their minds about signing the convention. No other countries have committed themselves to supporting the Australian position. Some have suggested that we should go for a ban now and reconsider mining later, when there is a need for Antarctic minerals. That is not a practical alternative. The convention bans all Antarctic mineral activity, except in accordance with its strict terms. Moreover, even if it were to be a practical alternative, we believe that it would be contrary to the interests of Antarctic environmental protection.

By passing the Bill we have an excellent opportunity to make real progress on the protection of the environment in Antarctica. This is the first piece of legislation to prohibit mineral exploration in Antarctica by British nationals and companies. The Government therefore strongly support the convention and intend to ratify it.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 121, Noes 217.

Division No. 278] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Allen, Graham	Clay, Bob
Alton, David	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Anderson, Donald	Cohen, Harry
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Armstrong, Hilary	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Corbyn, Jeremy
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Cousins, Jim
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Cryer, Bob
Bermingham, Gerald	Darling, Alistair
Blunkett, David	Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Bradley, Keith	Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Dewar, Donald
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Dixon, Don
Buckley, George J.	Dunnachie, Jimmy
Caborn, Richard	Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Callaghan, Jim	Fisher, Mark
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Foster, Derek
Canavan, Dennis	Foulkes, George
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Galbraith, Sam

Galloway, George
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hinchliffe, David
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jack, Michael
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading), and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion and the Road Traffic (Drivers Licensing and Information Systems) Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

ANTARCTIC MINERALS BILL *[LORDS]* [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Ordered,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Antarctic Minerals Bill *[Lords]*, ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums which Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are obliged to pay to any person under or by virtue of the Convention of the Regulation of Antarctic Mineral Resource Activities;

(b) any administrative expenses of the Secretary of State in consequence of the provisions of the Act; and

(c) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

ANTARCTIC MINERALS BILL *[LORDS]* [WAYS AND MEANS]

Ordered,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Antarctic Minerals Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the inclusion in licences granted under the Act of conditions requiring the rendering of payments to the Secretary of State; and

(b) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund. —*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Road Traffic (Driver Licensing and Information Systems) Bill *[Lords]*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [26 June], That the clause *(Sight testing), proposed on consideration of the Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee),* be read a Second time.

Which clause was:

New Clause 1

SIGHT TESTING

'It shall be a condition of the validity of any driving licence that the eyesight of the holder has been tested within a period and to a standard which shall be prescribed by a statutory instrument subject to approval by both Houses of Parliament.'.

Question again proposed.

10.13 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) asked whether there should be a free test. There is a free test, which is given not just once every so often—every driver has the duty to make sure that he can read a number plate at about 70 ft. For certain characters, the distance is 75 ft and for others 67ft. If the hon. Gentleman can read, from one end of the Chamber to the other, the pseudo number plate which I am holding up, his eyesight is good enough to pass the test. The medical profession say that that is correct.

The hon. Gentleman thought that, for some reason, I was trying to stay in the Prime Minister's favour. If he thinks that, he must be the only person to do so on this issue. What matters is cutting casualties. His speech did nothing to do that, but would mislead people. I ask the House to reject the new clause.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I must respond to the Minister's point. He said that it is a free test, but it is free only at the beginning of one's driving experience. People may drive for 40 or 50 years without having to take another test. Their eyesight can seriously deteriorate in that time.

Mr. Bottomley: It might help the House if I repeat what I said earlier. Drivers should be able at all times to read a number plate at the distance that I quoted. It is not once in a lifetime: it is every time that someone is driving. It might help the House if the hon. Gentleman either reads the report in *Hansard*, which will make matters clear to him, or takes this pseudo number plate outside the Chamber and keeps walking, as the House has already heard him.

Mr. Cohen: I heard the Minister very clearly indeed. However, some people who passed their test a while ago will not be able to read that number plate, and there is no requirement for them to take another test. As the Government have imposed charges, those people are likely to be discouraged from taking another test, and that is likely to lead to more accidents.

I will not repeat what I said in the debate last week. The points are clear. The Government are well behind the rest of Europe in respect of driving standards. The Minister is right. This matter is not about his status; it is about accidents. The Government are taking a reckless attitude.

They will realise that they must introduce a higher standard of medical fitness for drivers, including eyesight tests.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): Before the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) withdraws his proposal, I, too, endorse what he has said. There will come a time when the country will require more stringent eyesight tests for motorists. I disagree with the hon. Gentleman's proposition that compulsory testing should be introduced. I hope that my hon. Friend, in his influential and powerful position as Minister for Roads and Traffic, will encourage voluntary and more stringent eyesight testing, particularly by insurance companies. I do not agree with imposing great bureaucratic controls. Through insurance contracts and the driver licensing regulations, we have enough sanctions to bring to bear on individual motorists to ensure that they have regular eyesight tests. It is not the hon. Gentleman but the Department of Transport which has a blind spot on eyesight testing. There seems to be ample evidence——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is this an intervention or a speech?

Mr Moate: I hoped that it was a speech, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) for clarifying the position. I will do all that I can to make sure that the medical contribution to road casualties is continually monitored and that we re-emphasise to all drivers the need to make sure that they meet the correct medical test. We will do all that we can to make the roads safer in that way.

Mr. Moate: I am grateful for that intervention. I hope that it is in order to make a speech on this important subject.

Mr. Speaker: Of course it is in order. I was slightly confused because the hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) said, "Before the hon. Gentleman sits down." I thought that he was making an intervention.

Mr. Moate: I said, "Before the hon. Member for Leyton withdraws his proposal."

I certainly do not wish to detain the House, but I wish to record a matter of great importance. Although the hon. Gentleman speaks at enormous length, he speaks persuasively. *[Interruption.]* He always persuades me that a 10-minute limit for speeches is a good idea. On this occasion, his point is valid. There is a strong case for regular eyesight testing for motorists. It would be helpful for motorists, and it need not be any imposition on them. It would help to reduce the number of casualties and accidents on the road.

I should like my hon. Friend to bring pressure to bear on insurance companies to remind motorists of their obligation under their contracts of insurance to seek eyesight tests at every renewal. That would be to the benefit of the community and would ultimately help to reduce casualties on the road. To that extent, the hon. Member for Leyton has assisted the House by introducing the new clause and I am grateful to him for speaking so briefly on this occasion.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I was delayed in getting two computer disks from my office, so unfortunately I missed the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) who seems to be running from the Chamber. I do not know what has come over my hon. Friend, but he seems to be running around the building at the moment.

Last time we debated this matter, the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) made some strange manoeuvres to prevent further discussion. At that time, the Minister had failed to explain why he was not prepared to require eyesight tests. To anyone remotely concerned about road safety—the Minister claims to be very concerned about it—it is patently obvious that compulsory eyesight testing is the answer. I hope that now that the Minister has had a little time to think matters over as a result of the intervention of his hon. Friend the Member for Watford, who gave him an early night, he will tell us that he is prepared to introduce regular eyesight testing for motorists.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: For the benefit of the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), I repeat what I said earlier. There is a continual requirement that all motorists should be able to meet the eyesight test. If the hon. Gentleman reads *Hansard,* he will see the specification.

Question put and negatived.

Clause 1

ABOLITION OF SPECIAL LICENCES FOR DRIVING HGVs AND PSVs

Amendments made: No. 7, in line 22 after 'drive', insert 'or a goods vehicle of any class or, as the case may be, a passenger-carrying vehicle of any class prescribed for the purposes of this subsection'.

No. 8, in line 35, at end insert

'and the reference to prescribed classes of goods vehicles or passenger-carrying vehicles is a reference to classes of goods vehicles or passenger-carrying vehicles (within the meaning of the 1988 Act) prescribed under that paragraph.'.—*[Mr. Peter Bottomley.]*

Clause 10

OPERATORS' LICENCES

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): I beg to move amendment No. 14, in page 14, line 9 after 'danger', insert 'or nuisance'.

The Bill as drafted enables the Secretary of State to amend an operator's licence without the consent of the licence holder if a change is needed to prevent a danger to the public. The amendment would extend the power of the Secretary of State to amend the licence to cover circumstances in which the operation of a driver information system is causing a nuisance.

Throughout our proceedings on the Bill, the Opposition have voiced the concerns of local highway authorities that the introduction of Autoguide could generate two types of problem as a result of traffic being directed along unsuitable roads.—first, road safety problems and, secondly, amenity and traffic management problems, including noise and congestion. Ministers have consistently argued that it is unlikely that such problems will arise and that the pilot scheme planned for London will provide an opportunity to iron out any problems. That approach ignores the fact that, should the pilot show that Autoguide results in nuisance problems for certain communities, the Bill—which will then be an Act—will

[Ms. Joan Ruddock]

contain no provision under which action can be taken by the Secretary of State, except on road safety grounds alone.

The amendment would give no extra powers to highway authorities. It does not impose any burdens on Autoguide operators. It would simply empower the Secretary of State to act if amenity or traffic problems arose as a result of the introduction of Autoguide, as we suspect they may.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The House is grateful to the hon. Lady for the way in which she introduced the amendment. For those in a legal frame of mind who read the amendment, she has made it clear that we are talking about loss of amenity, rather than nuisance, which has a particular legal meaning. As the House knows, the Government's view is that driver information systems, such as Autoguide, should be operated and financed by the private sector. Development will require heavy capital investment. Operators will be prepared to go ahead with such schemes only if they can be confident that, once awarded, a licence cannot be amended by the Secretary of State without the operator's consent. That approach is reflected generally in part II.

Clause 10(6) breaches that principle in one respect. It enables the Secretary of State, without the consent of the licence holder, to attach new conditions if they are designed to prevent danger to the public. The House will take the view that in such circumstances there should be a clear and overriding need to amend a licence.

However, the amendment would go further. It would provide that the Secretary of State could unilaterally alter a licence to prevent a nuisance, in the common sense view, which would leave the operator in uncertainty about the circumstances in which the Secretary of State might use that power. The effect would probably be to deter operators from seeking licences and consequently to the loss of the benefit of driver information systems such as Autoguide. In asking the House not to accept the amendment, I must make it plain that I cannot envisage circumstances in which there would be a serious loss of amenity, or other unbearable or undesirable conditions, where there was not also a diminution of safety. For all practical purposes, the power in clause 10(6) will probably meet the hon. Lady's aim.

I ask the House not to accept the amendment. The hon. Lady has made a serious point, but her proposal can be encompassed within the provisions on safety. I doubt whether noise would ever be a problem on its own. Noise would be produced by a lot of traffic using an unsuitable road and that would have an effect on safety, too. If there were no pedestrians at all, the road would probably be a motorway, in which case it would probably be outside a city or town.

Ms. Ruddock: I thank the Minister for his comments. I know that highway authorities will take note of them and I hope that they will accept that he is, in a sense, making the offer that if there is a nuisance of the sort that we have described, they will be able to take the matter up on the road safety grounds specified in the Bill. That is extremely important and goes a small way to meeting my points. In view of that, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Cohen: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 15, line 1, leave out

'may be required to be furnished to the Secretary of State under subsection (8)(f) above'

and insert

'shall be disclosed by the operator to any person'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 2, in clause 11, page 15, line 13, at end insert

'or

(c) driver information has been used, collected, obtained or disclosed in a way that is unrelated to the operation of the system.'.

Mr. Cohen: I will take a little longer on these amendments. The implication of amendment No. 2 is that the abuse of driver information can be punished by loss of licence and the acquisition of a criminal record by the company, such as Autoguide. It will place a limitation on cavalier operators who could be tempted to make a fast buck by using driver information for other purposes. Amendment No. 2 will force operators to be careful about how they use driver information and any misuse of it could be a breach of the conditions for obtaining an operator's licence. Amendment No. 2 will allow the licence to be revoked if there is misuse.

Amendment No. 2 will also place an onus on the Secretary of State for Transport and the Minister to specify how information is to be used, collected, obtained or disclosed in relation to the driver information system, probably in the licence granted under clause 10. The Secretary of State should give guidance to operators in that respect. Unlike the amendment that I proposed to clause 8 in Committee, which the Minister did not like because it forbade absolutely the use of driver information for any other purpose, amendment No. 2 is a halfway house to those objections.

Clause 10(6), for example, gives the Secretary of State flexibility to amend the terms and conditions associated with the granting of the licence and so provides guidance regarding the acceptable use, disclosure, collection and obtaining of information, so that they are related to the operaton of the driver information system in the licence. Amendment No. 2 would constrain such uses, disclosures, collection and obtaining so that they would be related to the operation of the system, rather than directly "relevant", which was the key word of my previous amendment. As such, it is a happy compromise and one which any reasonable Minister should be more than happy to accept.

I remind the Minister of the significance of the written answer that he gave me on 21 April in column *305* of volume 151 of *Hansard*, when he stated that the disclosure of personal data from Autoguide will be subject to a non-disclosure exemption under the Data Protection Act 1984. In my assessment, the legal aspect of that is positively dangerous, especially as we are dealing with a computer system that could be developed to trace the movements of individuals by tracing from and to where they drive.

10.30 pm

"Non-disclosure" is an awful piece of jargon but it means, first, that there is no restriction on the disclosure of information held in manual files. Non-automated

information associated with autoguide is, by definition, not covered by the Data Protection Act and can therefore be used and disclosed freely.

Secondly, it means that the disclosure of personal information from Autoguide is not subject to the requirements of the third data protection principle—that it should not be used or disclosed in any manner that is incompatible with its purpose.

Thirdly, disclosures of personal information from Autoguide need not be registered with the data protection registrar. Fourthly, Autoguide information is not subject to the enforcement powers of the registrar in relation to all eight of the data protection principles.

In Committee, the Minister placed great store by the Data Protection Act. However, its provisions are insufficient in respect of information from Autoguide which could be used for a purpose other than for road safety and good traffic management, which the Minister assured us on Second Reading was its sole purpose. It can be used for all sorts of other purposes. Amendment No. 2 goes some way to ensuring that information held in a driver information system cannot be abused quite so easily.

Amendment No. 1 states that Autoguide information should not be disclosed

"by the operator to any person".

The amendment seeks to ensure that the Secretary of State, and no other person, can require information from a driver information system, such as Autoguide, in a form that can identify drivers and owners. At the moment, the Secretary of State for Transport has accepted that he would stop himself infringing privacy, but he has left it open to all other Ministers and organisations outside his control, such as the police and the security services, to be able to require the information and thus infringe privacy.

To make absolute the details of individuals whose details are recorded on driver information systems, my amendment extends the protections that the Secretary of State has given to himself to all other Secretaries of State and all governmental and other organisations. The arguments that the Secretary of State has applied to himself should surely apply to those other individuals and bodies.

I remind the Minister of his exchange with my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) in Committee when she asked how an individual would know that the information had been passed on. The Minister replied:

"It will not be passed on to the Secretary of State. That is what the Bill says."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 16 May 1989; c. 51.]

From that exchange, it appears that it is possible for other Secretaries of State or Government bodies to obtain information from Autoguide in a form that identifies individuals. The powers granted under clause 10(8)(g) expressly authorise the Secretary of State to allow other persons to inspect records and make copies. Those records could include the owners or drivers of vehicles who pass an Autoguide detector at the start of a political demonstration. Such information might be passed on.

Such authoritarian behaviour was referred to in Committee by both my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who said that he was held on the stolen and suspect vehicle index of the police national computer during the miners' strike, and by my hon. Friend the Member for Deptford, who said that she was followed by Security Service agents because of her effective work with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. That will be encouraged by unrestricted access to Autoguide information.

Mr. Corbyn: In Committee there was substantial discussion about the use of such information. It was revealed that, during the miners' strike, the stolen vehicles index was used to trace cars owned by members of the National Union of Mineworkers and those who supported them on picket line duties. There is no guarantee that the Autoguide system will not be used merely to update such records and extend that information. Does my hon. Friend not think it an outrage that, rather than trying to protect civil liberties, the Minister is giving power to the Big Brother state to examine the activities of people on legitimate and legal protest?

Mr. Cohen: That is exactly my point, and that is the reason for the amendment. We must protect civil liberties and learn the lessons of the Big Brother state during the miners' strike. We are seeing increasing encroachments on civil liberties. We must stop new technology, such as the Autoguide system, enabling that to be carried a stage further by an authoritarian Government, which this Government have shown all the hallmarks of being.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I do not know how much longer the hon. Gentleman is going to take us down this line, but I had the impression that when he went on demonstrations he wanted it to be known that he was there rather than be anonymous. If he went on a demonstration, I did not know that he went by car. If he was going to a demonstration by car, I do not know that he would want to sign up with the commercial Autoguide system to tell him which way to go. It seems that he is taking us into the realms of fantasy. If he brought us back to his amendments, we could try to answer his points and the House could decide whether he is right or wrong.

Mr. Cohen: The Minister treats these matters flippantly, but they are encroachments on civil liberties in a very big way. I shall show the House how such encroachments are occurring. There is the Autoguide system, whereby people's number plates can be checked and it can be discovered where they have travelled to and from; the ticket barriers on the Underground have facilities to read the season ticket strips to record people's movements; and the Home Office is developing a system called "Wizard", which is a facial recognition system that will photograph drivers and people on the move.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Have a shave.

Mr. Cohen: Yes, it will recognise my beard, and report where I have moved to and from.

In a recent answer to me, the Minister said that travel agents and airlines will have to hand over information on people who book with them, if matters of public order or national security are involved. Those are creeping infringements of our vital civil liberty—the freedom of movement.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will my hon. Friend tell us whether there is any truth in the rumour that the Autoguide or the new Wizard system will be used when the judges go out on strike again? If the judges decide that they want to spread their strike from the Royal Courts of

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

Justice to the circuit, and the police decide to put up a road block with the help of the Autoguide or the Wizard system, some miners might say that justice was being done.

Of course, other miners and myself would say that we do not believe in infringements of civil liberties, whoever they might affect. Is there anything in the rumour that, as an experiment, that equipment will be used outside the Royal Courts of Justice?

Mr. Cohen: There could be, if the judges upset the Government enough. However, all the signs are that the Government will cave in to that vested interest very quickly. It is more likely that that equipment will be used against the miners, railwaymen and other workers than against the judges. The Government have to keep the judges sweet so that they can punish the railwaymen and the miners in the courts.

Mr. Corbyn: Does my hon. Friend agree that Autoguide could be used to peel off the ringleaders among the judges from those who might be latent supporters of the Government? Is my hon. Friend also aware that the traffic monitoring scheme in London operates automatic video cameras, some of which are not pointed at the traffic? Some are pointed at Speaker's corner, some at the assembly area in Hyde park and others at the centre of Trafalgar square, where no traffic is allowed. There are many points in London where the so-called traffic information systems, designed by the Metropolitan police to monitor traffic movement, are used to monitor pedestrian, civilian movements. Those systems are part of a data-collecting agency. Does my hon. Friend agree that Autoguide could be used for the same purpose?

Mr. Cohen: Yes. The collection of a vast amount of data on individuals is a serious infringement of privacy. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) referred to the Wizard system, and for all I know it could have been used during the recent visit of the Australian Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, in which case the system should have been called "The Wizard of Oz". But enough of such frivolity; this is a serious matter.

Mr. Moate: Given his remarkable command of such modern technology, perhaps the hon. Gentleman can explain something to me. Those who join the Autoguide system voluntarily install in their car a piece of equipment to link them to that system. How will such people be victims of a system whereby they are unknowingly scrutinised?

Mr. Cohen: The hon. Gentleman is correct that, initially, the system will apply to those who subscribe to it. The Government, however, want to extend the system to all motorists; for it to work properly, that must happen. In that way, the Government could cut the number of signs on roads and so on. The system, however, has the facility to read all number plates whether one is a member of it or not. That system could be linked up with Wizard for the facial recognition of drivers.

Mr. Skinner: Is Autoguide from West Germany?

Mr. Cohen: The system began in West Germany and in Committee the Minister told us that he had a ride around West Berlin in a car using the Autoguide system. He did not say whether the Germans use the Wizard system.

The ability to trace a person's movements is a serious infringement of civil liberties and it is part of the Big Brother state. The Minister accepted that he did not want such private information to himself, but that undertaking should also apply to other Ministers and to other Government services.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I understand that the Home Office trials were conducted exclusively with equipment made in West Germany. Even if the equipment has any merit, which I doubt, it does not have the merit of adding jobs to our manufacturing industry, which, since the Tories came to power in 1979, has lost about 2 million jobs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) will remember that the amendment is concerned with disclosing names. It would not be in order for him to follow up the point that has just been made.

Mr. Cohen: I merely remind the House that the Minister said on Second Reading that the purpose of the system was to improve road safety and good traffic management. Unfortunately, it will let in many other purposes. If the Minister were to uphold his own words on Second Reading and in Committee, he would accept the amendment and ensure that the Bill relates only to road safety and traffic management and does not infringe privacy and civil liberties.

10.45 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and I may be paranoid, but that does not mean that they are not out to get us. As my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) said, it is not compulsory to join Autoguide. Even if one does join it, the system does not record the driver. If it is a matter of recording number plates, it is possible for someone to stand by the side of the road recording car number plates as though he is standing on a railway platform recording the numbers of engines or carriages.

When the hon. Member for Leyton spends all his time referring to spy ideas, I recall the nightmare which I shared with the members of the Committee which involves being the person who is allocated to digest the hon. Gentleman's speeches to see whether there is anything new or interesting in them. The hon. Gentleman talks as though he is the third man or, if I might say so after the European elections, "The Green Man". He uses a roundabout way to try to tell the House that he is worried that new information may be provided by the system.

The system is designed to give the driver information on which way to go to reach his destination, and that is all. There is provision for a second tier of information, which, with the consent of Autoguide, would tell the subscriber where his vehicle is. That would be explicit information and there would be powers to ensure that that information is not shared. The system can work well without even the operator knowing the identity of individual vehicles that are receiving route guidance.

Amendment No. 2 is unnecessary. It would give the Secretary of State no more power than that provided under the Bill as drafted. It is technically defective in that it seeks to control the use of information derived from

vehicles when "driver information", which is the term used in the amendment, is defined in the Bill as giving route guidance to vehicles.

The amendments should be resisted. The hon. Gentleman, on reflection, may not wish to press them to a Division.

Mr. Cohen: I have made my point. I believe that these issues will come back to the House in future as problems ensue. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Road Traffic (Driver Licensing and Information Systems) Bill *[Lords]*

Ms. Ruddock: I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 15, line 8, at end insert—

'(12) Before using his powers under subsections (1) and (6) above, the Secretary of State shall seek the views of the relevant highway authorities.'.

The amendment continues the main theme pursued by the Opposition in relation to part II, which is the absence of any reference to local highway authority involvement in deciding where driver information systems operate, which roads should be included or excluded and how any problems should be tackled. The amendment tackles the deficiency by requiring the Secretary of State to seek the views of relevant highway authorities before issuing or amending an operator's licence.

Throughout our discussions, Ministers have tried to have it both ways in their efforts to resist any form of local democratic control over an autoguide operator. The main purpose of the amendment is to enable highway authorities to undertake their traffic management and road safety responsibilities in the autoguide era by having some influence over the implementation of the system.

In responding to amendments in his inimitable style in Committee, the Minister proclaimed:

"The rats are already running. Does anyone seriously believe that there are unused rat runs waiting to be discovered by autoguide? Each of us . . . is aware that people know which routes are a diversion from the main signed route."

A few seconds later, when arguing that autoguide would be less distracting than other means of navigation, the Minister said:

"The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is sitting in the passenger seat. His wife is driving and she asks, 'How do we get to the next place?' They start looking at maps".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E,* 16 May 1989, c. 65.]

If autoguide is to be commercially viable, it must be aimed at those who do not know all the rat runs in every Member's constituency. It must provide a faster service than simply relying on signed main routes. In those circumstances there must at least be the danger that the use of some rat runs will be encouraged. There are already signs that minor roads are to be included in the autoguide scheme. At the first meeting of the autoguide pilot assessment group, involving the Department of Transport, the local authority associations and the police, the Department would not give an undertaking that minor roads would be excluded from the London pilot scheme, because it was too early to say.

Throughout the Bill's passage, Ministers have warned of the need not to impose constraints on the commercial operators. Of course, the operators will be pressing for a maximum number of roads to be included in the scheme. Therefore, it is essential that Parliament provides the means by which the bodies responsible for traffic management issues—the local highway authorities—will have an opportunity to influence the introduction of autoguide.

On Second Reading, the Minister stressed that the success of autoguide will depend on co-operation between a number of different interests. But he went on to argue:

"It is quite important not to set down in advance that local authorities should be able to have a veto."—[*Official Report,* 13 April 1989; Vol. 150, c. 1102.]

The Minister pursued a similar theme in Committee, claiming:

"If we allow too much direct local authority control now, it is likely to strangle the system at birth."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee F,* 16 May 1989; c. 70.]

Local authorities are rightly apprehensive. At the meeting of the autoguide pilot assessment group, for which the Minister is responsible, the Department said that it could see no reason why any road in London, however unsuitable, should be excluded from the network of roads used to direct through traffic on which the autoguide system should operate in the pilot stage. That is in direct opposition to the Government's own policies as expressed in "Traffic Management Guidance for London, 1987", which says that roads off the designated road network are essentially local roads and through traffic should not be encouraged to use them.

The amendment would provide highway authorities with no extra powers, but they would have the right to be consulted. This is a modest amendment, but it is essential if highway authorities are to have confidence in the legislation. The only alternative would be for the Minister to give a clear undertaking to consult the highway authorities before undertaking his licensing responsibilities.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It may be helpful if I intervene at this stage in the debate.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) on the research that has gone into her speech. She is concerned about a serious point, but I hope to persuade the House that the amendment would not be the right way forward.

It would be difficult to have an autoguide pilot scheme in London without using any minor roads, partly because on approaching central London it is difficult to define a designated road and so exclude a road on that basis.

I take this opportunity to repeat that I have no intention of encouraging people to cross the centre of London, or even to cross inner London, when going from one part of outer London to another. I have been consistent in that, although it takes some people a while to get the message.

Ms. Ruddock: The Minister says that he does not seek to encourage that, but surely that is the purpose of autoguide.

Mr. Bottomley: The purpose of autoguide is to make sure that people take efficient routes. It is inefficient to put traffic on the wrong roads. I spend a lot of time explaining to people that many of the rat runs to which they are so devoted not only take them a longer distance, but a longer time. Studies carried out on the A3 in Kingston showed that. However, it is difficult to persuade some people of the truth of that. Autoguide would demonstrate that more easily.

We all know that dealing with junction problems using designated roads, primary route networks and even trunk roads, gives travellers a greater advantage, as well as those residents who are no longer disturbed by the rats who are doing the running. I congratulate the hon. Lady on her logic at the beginning of her speech. I am not sure that it took the discussion much further forward, but Freddie Ayer would have been proud of it.

Under the amendment, if the Secretary of State wants to make a change before amending a licence in London or within the area of the M25, he might have to consult 20 or 30 local authorities. As to what will happen initially, both the consortia interested in the pilot scheme said that they will make presentations to local authority associations and to the police.

The critical question is whether there will be any possible gain by sending volumes of traffic down the wrong roads. The answer is no. But it cannot be sensibly argued that one should work only with local authorities to effect consent, or go through a relatively long procedure before introducing a scheme.

Ms. Ruddock: If the Minister is confident that the system will work well and give rise to no problems, why on earth does he not concede our argument and give local authorities the right to be consulted?

Mr. Bottomley: The simple answer relates both to the amendment and to red tape. This is the third or fourth time that the same arguments have been rehearsed. The detail may have been modified, but the points made are basically the same. The hon. Lady agrees that there is no point in trying to divert traffic down the rat runs.

Autoguide is the one system that offers the potential of telling road users which routes will save them time. The hon. Lady is probably aware that the alternative systems, which would not require a licence, were based on a microcomputer whereby one disk would give the motorist the choice of the fastest route, the shortest route, the most scenic route, the route taking him through the greatest part of the hon. Lady's constituency or mine, and so on. It seems to me that we should look for the common sense solution and avoid tying up an innovative project with unnecessary red tape, or tying the hands of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State by prohibiting him from making a modification in respect of the M25 without consulting a large number of highway authorities.

Mr. Moate: I go along with my hon. Friend's thesis, but what would be the position if a route perceived by autoguide to be economically efficient turns out to be environmentally unpopular, particularly among the residents of a quiet street? If representations are made to my hon. Friend by a local authority or by a large number of residents, what sanction can he use when saying to the autoguide companies, "This route is bad, it is inflicting a great deal of environmental damage, and it is very unpopular"?

Mr. Cryer: The Minister will be kicked on to the Conservative Back Benches by a ruthless Prime Minister.

Mr. Bottomley: If that is so, I shall join the hon. Gentleman on the rotters' Bench, offering good advice —and I may find myself losing my seat in the same way that he lost his.

It is too early to say that no minor roads should be included in the network. The hon. Member for Deptford agrees with other hon. Members that environmental nuisance is unlikely to arise on an unsuitable road without there being danger as well. We believe that we have found a helpful way forward.

The Department is concerned as much about safety as about traffic management. The two overlap. We think that consultants should be engaged to monitor the operation of the pilot scheme, so that we can learn its lessons—rather than say that nothing should ever be allowed to go wrong. The arguments have been rehearsed at least three times in the House, and the scheme should be allowed to go forward. It has been established that presentations will be made to local authorities, and when the pilot scheme is in operation we will know whether the fears that have been expressed are justified. If they are, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will take that into account.

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister's churlish refusal to concede our arguments calls into question the logic of his own arguments. If, as he says, presentations will be made to local authorities, why cannot they also be properly consulted? The Minister told his hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) that he is concerned about environmentally sensitive routes being damaged by autoguide. The hon. Gentleman knows that, unless local highway authorities are involved, they will have no power to alter an autoguide route.

The scheme is a form of privatised roads, privatised traffic management and privatised direction system. Unless there is proper licensing linked to the local highway authority, the system will encourage rat running, the use of unsuitable roads by high-speed cars, and commuter motoring.

The Minister says that he does not want traffic crossing central London or an increase in commuter motoring into and out of the area, but he has no powers to stop it. Once a company has been given a licensing system or the power to introduce one through a particular area, with no consultation with the local authority, the Minister has handed over part of the traffic management powers to the small minority of motorists who can afford to subscribe to autoguide, and to an autoguide company that is not interested in the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, the environment or the community. It will be interested only in getting someone in a company car from A to B by a faster route. That is the motive behind the autoguide system.

Mr. Cohen: Will my hon. Friend give some thought to the democratic rights—if any—that would be enjoyed by a resident of a street that was being rat run because of the system?

11 pm

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend makes a valuable point. Such a resident would probably have no rights at all. In Committee I discussed with the Minister and others the potential problems in Finsbury Park, where I live. The area is bedevilled by rat-running commuters. It is appalling: every morning there are traffic jams everywhere, with people speeding through in expensive cars, often very dangerously. Local residents are rightly angry about it. The local authority, Islington council, has done what it can, but its powers are limited because it does not control overall traffic movements.

If the autoguide system comes in, roads that we should like to be restricted or closed—or subject to the introduction of speed humps—may become subject to an autoguide system. What will happen to the local community then? Does a road with autoguide beacons down it automatically become a major through road? I suspect that it does.

Such matters may not seem important to the Minister. I fail to understand, however, why valuable parliamentary

[Mr. Corbyn]

time, the expertise of dozens of people in the Department of Transport and a great deal of money should be expended to introduce a system that denies local highway authorities the power to plan their traffic management schemes properly, and merely enables a small number of people to travel through urban areas faster. That energy, money and parliamentary time should be spent on promoting public transport and supporting the efforts of highway authorities to make urban roads safer, rather than more dangerous, as they will become under this system.

At the heart of the matter is the question of local authority consultation. The Minister gives us all the honeyed phrases that he can: he says that he will talk to local authorities and give them demonstration runs. He offered a demonstration run to my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and myself, but unfortunately neither of us could attend on the day that he mentioned. I hope that the offer will be repeated. The Minister offers formal meetings, but he does not concede the basic power that is essential if highway authorities are to plan traffic movements properly.

This is a recipe for anarchy, danger and the undermining of public control over traffic systems. Control is being handed over to a private company whose only interest is in making money for the minority of motorists who can afford to subscribe to it. It is an outrage: the least that the Government can do is concede the right and powers of the highway authorities.

Mr. Cryer: I support the amendment, because it makes sense. One of the things that worries me about the system is that the private operators who are behind it will be subject to inbuilt pressure to promote all sorts of short cuts. Motorists will feel that if they save five minutes through the system others should be persuaded to join it.

Mr. Corbyn: I apologise for intervening on my hon. Friend's speech so early. Does he agree, however, that although the initial promotion is aimed at urban areas, a spread to rural areas could pose a danger of heavy traffic being directed down rural roads which would provide a rapid short cut for those who knew their way around? The danger does not apply just in urban communities such as the one that I represent. It could apply equally to country lanes and smaller roads.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend makes a relevant point. I represent an urban area, one third of the city of Bradford, and in the city as a whole there are about 200 road improvement schemes designed to protect pedestrians and separate traffic from pedestrians because of the intrusion of vehicles into densely populated areas. The local authority cannot finance such schemes because of a shortage of money from the Department of Transport.

I have taken up with the local authority many cases of constituents complaining that cars are running down their roads, taking corners quickly and making use of side roads as short cuts. They say, "We have no way of stopping them, our children are in danger as they go to and from school and the volume of traffic is increasing." Because of that increased volume of traffic, motorists are bound to seek short cuts. Indeed, the autoguide system may result in such short cuts being invoked as part of local authority planning procedures.

That makes it all the more important for the citizen to have the right of representation, with the local authority having the right of consultation. Such a right for the citizen should be built into the scheme from the beginning. The citizen should not be excluded from jurisdiction over the development of traffic routes where those routes impinge on ordinary urban, and possibly rural, life.

Traffic is a growing problem, a despoliation of our cities and villages. Acceptance of the amendment would not inhibit the Minister, but it would establish a pattern for involvement by the public in a highly sensitive area. At present, when I take up constituents' complaints, the local authority replies, "We do not have money to finance road improvements, even though, on existing trunk and minor roads which are well used, there is loss of life and limb."

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend referred to problems in urban areas and my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) made the same point but relating to country lanes. Is my hon. Friend aware that coaches and heavy vehicles could come within the autoguide system? With unrestricted access, so to speak—if the amendment is not accepted—those heavy vehicles could find their way down country lanes and residential streets.

Mr. Cryer: That is a potential development and proves that we must have a consultative process for the citizen. People are more inclined to accept developments if they feel that they have some safeguard. After all, the Department of Transport is not generally known as the people's friend. People do not readily turn to that Department for guidance when road schemes are mooted.

If the system is successful—I have reservations about that—commercial vehicle operators will make calculations about delays because they lack knowledge about routes. They will want to use their vehicles in as efficient a manner as possible. Consequently, they will want to use the system to speed up distribution of supplies.

The Government have capitulated yet again to the Commission. Instead of rejecting completely the introduction of 40-tonne vehicles on our roads, they agreed to vehicles heavier than 38 tonnes being allowed on to them. Now we have the grim prospect of even heavier vehicles on our roads.

Instead of turning down the amendment, on the somewhat dubious basis that it would hinder the swift implementation of the measure, the Minister should take people—in particular, local authorities—into his confidence and say that they have a part to play if controversial aspects of the system impinge on people's peace of mind and safety. Initially, very few people might want to take up that right. Local authorities may welcome the system and say that it will lead to improvements. However, the amendment is a safety net, and I urge the Minister to accept it.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said that our relationship with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities is not as good as it should be. *[Interruption.]* My right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) reminds me that in her day it was fine. I spent most of today with the AMA. Nobody raised any problems over autoguide. They had plenty of opportunities to do so. There are many examples of co-operation between the Department and local authorities.

The Government look after only 4 per cent. of the roads. Most highway authorities look after roads for the Department, as well as looking after their own 96 per cent. The partnership works well. No local authority association has much to fear from autoguide. The president of the AMA said that he is aware of the monitoring arrangements that have been agreed with the local authority associations. They are members of the autoguide pilot assessment group. The police are also members of that group. The operators will be working closely with individual local authorities. The safety points that I made are serious and important. The House should reject the amendment and get on with the pilot scheme. When we have had experience of it we shall be able to judge whether the fears are justified.

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister says that we shall then be able to judge whether the fears are justified. Surely it would be much better if he said that the Department will consult local authorities over the implementation of the scheme, if that is what it is minded to do. He is not prepared to give local authorities the opportunity to influence the scheme.

Mr. Bottomley: I am not sure that to say something twice will help either the House or the hon. Gentleman. There is nothing either in autoguide or in the Bill that in any way overrides the power of local authorities to manage traffic. That deals with the point that the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) and others are rightly concerned about and with the point that I have been concerned about for three and a half years—that through traffic should be on through routes. Traffic management requirements are automatically built into the autoguide system. If they were not, people would be required to do things that are unlawful as well as not very helpful. Unless we recognise that fact, we shall not make much progress.

We must ensure that traffic can move efficiently because it knows which route to take. As soon as more than a sample number of vehicles use autoguide, we cannot usefully send them down roads that are not suitable for them. It is essential to get rid of misguidance through ignorance rather than to try to abuse more and more parts of the road system, especially in urban areas.

Unless general traffic management action is taken, encouraged by the Department, which acts as a sort of community telephone exchange for local authorities, the car will remain the master of most urban areas. The lesson that we have learnt from the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and from a growing number of areas in the United Kingdom is that the car can be excluded from many areas by traffic management, not by trying to write too much detailed red tape, however natural it may be for the Labour party to do that, into the Bill.

Ms. Ruddock: The Minister does not seem to recognise that, because of the operation of autoguide, it is just conceivable that new traffic management problems will arise. If a lot of vehicles are sent down a road because it happens to be somewhat more empty than others, it might become a new rat run. Residents may go to their local authority and ask for restraining measures to be taken. The local authority would then come into conflict with the Minister's Department, as its measures might redirect traffic on to a designated road.

11.15 pm

Mr. Bottomley: That was a helpful intervention. If a local authority introduces traffic management arrangements, autoguide will have to take them into account. Autoguide's existence does not make any difference to the local authority's traffic management powers. Perhaps this debate has been useful as that point has been spelled out clearly. I do not think that I can add a great deal to what has already been said. The hon. Lady has made her point, and it has been taken into account.

Ms. Ruddock: Can the Minister tell me categorically that Autoguide will not be able to object to a new traffic management scheme?

Mr. Bottomley: It cannot be excluded from objecting. The whole point of traffic management schemes is that they are advertised so that people can object to them. It would be ludicrous to tell an operator that it cannot exercise the same rights as any other organisation, body or individual. Autoguide will have no power of veto. A veto exists only when proposals affect designated roads and the Secretary of State can exercise it in accordance with legislation. Unless the hon. Lady is suggesting that Autoguide should be forbidden by legislation from even writing to a local authority saying, "Oi, have you thought that your proposals might have an effect on traffic movement, and we are experts on traffic movement?" there is nothing to fear. I am sure that she is not suggesting that.

The hon. Lady has raised a matter sensibly, I have given a serious, factual answer, and I think that we ought to leave it there.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Bottomley: I would rather not give way to the hon. Gentleman, who can speak on Third Reading, as I have made my point and the House has got about as much out of this debate as it is likely to get.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 12

POWER TO INSTALL APPARATUS ETC

Amendment made: No. 9, in page 16, line 12, leave out subsection (3).—*[Mr. Peter Bottomley.]*

Schedule 1

EXISTING HGV AND PSV DRIVERS' LICENCES

Amendment made: No. 10, in page 23, line 31, at end insert—

'12. The power to make regulations under paragraph 8 above includes power to prescribe the classes of goods vehicle or passenger-carrying vehicle which, by virtue of section 1(2) of this Act, the holder of an existing licence is authorised to drive during the currency of his existing licence.'.—*[Mr. Peter Bottomley.]*

Schedule 2

PROVISIONS INSERTED IN ROAD TRAFFIC ACT 1988

Amendment made: No. 11, in page 29, line 41, at end insert—

'"provisional licence" means a licence granted by virtue of section 97(2) of this Act;'.—*[Mr. Peter Bottomley.]*

Schedule 5

DRIVER INFORMATION SYSTEMS: UNDERTAKERS' WORKS

Amendment made: No. 17, in page 42, leave out lines 16 to 46 and insert—

"'relevant undertaker" means—

(a) any person or authority authorised by or under any Act (whether public general or local) to carry on any railway, tramway, road transport, water transport, canal, inland navigation, dock, harbour, pier or lighthouse undertaking;

(b) any person to whom the telecommunications code is applied by a licence under section 7 of the Telecommunications Act 1984 authorising him to run a telecommunications system;

(c) any public gas supplier (within the meaning of Part I of the Gas Act 1986);

(d) any holder of a licence under Part I of the Electricity Act 1989 who is entitled to exercise any power conferred by paragraph 1 or 2 of Schedule 4 to that Act;

(e) the National Rivers Authority or any water undertaker or sewerage undertaker;

(f) any other licensed operator of a driver information system; or

(g) any person to whom this Schedule is applied by any Act passed after this Act;

"undertaker's works" means—

(a) in relation to a relevant undertaker falling within paragraph (a) above, any works which he is authorised to execute for the purpose of, or in connection with, the carrying on by him of the undertaking mentioned in that paragraph;

(b) in relation to a relevant undertaker falling within paragraph (b) above, any works which he is authorised to execute for the purposes of, or in connection with, a telecommunications system run by him;

(c) in relation to a relevant undertaker falling within paragraph (c) above, any works which he is authorised to execute for the purposes of, or in connection with, his supplying gas as a public gas supplier;

(d) in relation to a relevant undertaker falling within paragraph (d) above, any works which he is authorised to execute for any purpose connected with the carrying on of the activities which he is authorised by his licence to carry on;

(e) in relation to a relevant undertaker falling within paragraph (e) above, any works which that Authority or undertaker has power to execute for purposes connected with the carrying on of its functions;

(f) in relation to a relevant undertaker falling within paragraph (f) above, any works which he is authorised to execute for the purposes of, or in connection with, a driver information system operated by him; and;

(g) in relation to a relevant undertaker falling within paragraph (g) above, the works for the purposes of which this Schedule is applied to him."'.—*[Mr. Peter Bottomley.]*

Order for Third Reading read.—Queen's and Prince of Wales's Consent signified.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Peter Bottomley.]*

11.17 pm

Mr. Corbyn: We have had a short Committee stage and a fairly lengthy Report stage. Unfortunately, the two stages have been taken separately because of the antics of the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones). I am not quite sure whether he was trying to let his Back Benchers get home early or he could not keep them here.

Nothing that the Minister has said has altered the basic objection that many of us have to the Bill. It is called a road safety improvement measure, but it does not extend the eyesight testing requirement that many of us believe is necessary. The principal part of it concerns the provision of an autoguide system. The Minister said that Autoguide will not co-operate with local authorities because it does not have to, that local authorities will have no power to stop Autoguide coming in, but that when someone objects to, or supports, a traffic management scheme, Autoguide will be one of the participants in the consultation process. That is the kernel of the problem.

If we want to introduce a traffic management scheme, the people who are normally most affected are local residents, residents of adjoining streets which may be affected by increased or decreased traffic, local highway authorities and the emergency services. It is not normal to take account of objections from a company whose sole interest is to get people more quickly through that community. The Bill is giving a private company a franchise on our roads, which means giving it an unaccountable power for an undesirable end. I hope that the House will recognise that and oppose the Third Reading.

The legislation is of no benefit to those of us who are concerned about traffic movements and safety in inner urban areas. It is of no benefit in improving road safety as a whole. The energies that have gone into drafting the Bill could have been much better spent developing and improving public transport systems and keeping cars out of urban areas. The Minister says that he wants to do that, yet he gives powers to other people to encourage drivers to come into those areas. We would have been better off spending our time making our transport and traffic systems safer and more usable by the majority of the population rather than spending the time on an expensive autoguide system for the minority who can afford it, driving around in expensive cars, rat-running down small urban streets and country lanes.

Many Conservative Members may vote for the Bill. In a few months, when the systems are introduced, or in a few years, when they have been extended to the whole country, the Minister will get representations from many people who want the schemes removed from their area because of the complaints of local residents.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The speech by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is a ludicrous, open distortion which will do him no good. Autoguide's aim is to reduce congestion, mainly by ensuring that people do not get lost and go several times around the hon. Gentleman's constituency, my constituency or that of any other London Member during the pilot scheme. It means that they will find an efficient way of going where they want to go without going off the right track. Most of the tracks will be on the main roads. We are also making 1989 the Year of the Sign and ensuring that signs follow on from each other rather than act like the hon. Gentleman's speech—starting at the beginning, going halfway, getting lost and then picking up in some other direction.

We heard earlier that the scheme would be for the benefit of the friends of the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and then we heard that it would be for the benefit of the friends of the hon. Member for Islington, North who have big posh cars. We know, because it was established in Committee, that the local authorities will

maintain their traffic management powers, which are not affected by the Bill. We heard the interesting idea that those who are trying to serve the interests of road users —especially the commercial organisations, including those providing services to constituents in Islington, North, often in vehicles driven by those constituents—should be forbidden to offer a comment on local authority traffic management orders, but those people may know more about traffic management than the hon. Gentleman does.

Mr. Corbyn: Why does not the Minister answer the debate?

Mr. Bottomley: I thought that I had been answering the hon. Gentleman's speech, paying a courtesy to him that he seldom pays to others. The hon. Gentleman does not understand what he is talking about. He does not have the slightest conception of how to make traffic better for local residents. I suggest that he starts reading some of the traffic advisory unit notices that the Department issues. If he will not do that, he might look at some of the joint work of local authority associations. They understand what we are trying to do, and in general support us.

Mr. Corbyn: I was chairman of a planning committee.

Mr. Bottomley: When the hon. Gentleman was chairman, he should have spent more time listening than speaking.

Sensible contributions have been made in the debate, most of them by the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), who raised serious points, to which we have given serious answers. I commend the Bill to the House. It will improve safety, make driver licensing more efficient and pave the way for new driver information systems which will reduce traffic congestion. It will be a valuable improvement to road traffic law.

11.23 pm

Ms. Ruddock: There have been some interesting discussions on the Bill and the Opposition have pressed a number of amendments that would substantially improve it. I am sorry that the Minister has not been receptive to them. Indeed, he has been intransigent on a number of key points, and I know that many people inside and outside the House will be disappointed by his unwillingness to accommodate their concerns. Despite what the Minister said, I stress that those concerns included those put to me by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. As I said on Second Reading, in general we have not objected to the Bill. The proposals in part I, to unify the driver licensing system, are acceptable to us.

In Committee we spent much time discussing clause 6 of part I, which deals with new requirements for motor cyclists. Opposition Members welcome the requirement that motor cyclists take a training course before they are able to drive on the road, and all parts of the motor cycling world were in support of that. However, we were concerned about the applicability of the clause and possible impracticalities. In Committee, we sought several improvements to allow motor cyclists to ride their bikes to and from their courses. They would also have ensured an adequate number of properly qualified and trained instructors and would have set up a register of training centres. The hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) tabled amendments in an attempt to deal with the problem of access to such courses, but, unfortunately, those amendments were not selected for debate tonight.

Access problems may make it difficult, if not impossible, for people to attend the proposed training courses. Opposition Members supported the amendments, and I regret that the Minister has felt unable to do so. I hope that, when the Bill becomes law, the Minister will respond positively if the fears that have been articulated by industry and consumer lobbies are substantiated.

In Committee, as indeed tonight, Opposition Members reserved most criticism for part II of the Bill, which deals with parliamentary approval for autoguide. I have already explained the reasons we continue to press the Government either for statutory local authority, participation or broader terms of reference for the Secretary of State. Once again, I regret to say that the Minister has declined to listen. I regret also that he is unwilling to give local highway authorities their proper role in monitoring and controlling the use of that device. I acknowledge that, as the Minister has said, local authority associations are involved in the autoguide assessment group, and I welcome that. However, the House will recognise the difference between participation in an ad hoc advisory group and a statutory power if autoguide is detrimental to local authority areas.

I have seen autoguide in operation. I am convinced that it is undoubtedly a technical advance and that it will obviously be useful to individual drivers. However, Opposition Members do not believe that it is truly going to ease traffic congestion in London. As I said on Second Reading, it can clearly be useful as a route finder, but the consequence in London is that any motorist would be more inclined to use his car than public transport. That would be its effect on me. Concern that I might not be able to reach my destination conveniently and efficiently is more likely to make me leave my car at home and use public transport in the city. As a consequence of people taking such decisions, any spare road capacity that is found by autoguide will immediately be filled by more cars. As is already clear, there will be more pressure from autoguide operators to include minor roads in the system. After all our discussions, the Minister has failed to convince us that autoguide will do one jot of good in solving congestion in London.

Since Second Reading, we have had the pleasure of reading the Government's thoughts on road policy into the next century. We have learned also that road traffic is up by 6 per cent. in the first quarter of this year and that traffic speeds in the London peak hour are now 11·8 miles an hour, down yet again on the previous survey. A picture emerges, which we all know well, of more cars on the road moving more slowly, costing industry more money and causing more pedestrian accidents. The Government's response in the White Paper is to forecast a traffic explosion of between 83 per cent. and 142 per cent. by the year 2025. Hon. Members may like to know the reality of those cold statistics. An increase of 142 per cent. would mean an extra 32·7 million vehicles in addition to the 23 million-odd already on our roads.

This legislation clearly should not have been the priority for dealing with traffic problems in Britain. The Minister will need more than autoguide and new driver licensing to help him deal with those problems if his own Department's own forecasts become a reality. Therefore, Opposition Members give the Bill a limited welcome.

[Ms. Ruddock]

Naturally, we regret that the Government have not accepted our assistance in improving it. In particular, once again, the Minister has spurned real partnership with the local authorities.

11.30 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I share with the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) and my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) severe reservations about the operational effectiveness of clause 6, and I am sorry that we could not debate that provision tonight.

The Motor Cycle Association of Great Britain, the Auto-cycle Union—of which I am president, and which runs motor-cycle sport in this country—and the industry are very concerned about how the clause will operate in practice. The Minister will establish and improve centres to which learner motor cyclists go to receive training. In principle, we welcome that. Much will depend on where the centres are, however. In rural areas, motor cyclists may have to travel 50 miles to a centre—in Scotland, perhaps even 100 miles. How will they get there, and, if they happen to require additional training and do not qualify for a certificate the first time, how will they get home? Will they have to leave their motor bikes at some remote aerodrome and, try to get a bus home—if there is one?

The Minister does not seem to have addressed such practical problems in clause 6, and I hope that he will announce that he proposes to draft regulations that can be efficiently and effectively adhered to by learner motor cyclists. After all, we want to encourage motor cycling; it is a healthy sport and a healthy way of getting to work or travelling about in the normal course of one's life. We should not put difficulties in the way of people obtaining motor cycle riders' licences once they have received proper training. Yet clause 6—perhaps with the best of intentions—sets out to make matters as difficult as possible for the learner.

The industry assures me that even if we had 1,000 centres, there would be only one centre every 80 square miles. I suspect that there will be fewer centres than that and that the distances will be much greater. Some years ago, when we started to close the driver vehicle and licensing centres dotted round the country, I pointed out that there would be a great deal of difficulty if the centres became too remote. I suspect that exactly the same problem will arise with the training centres for motor cyclists.

Before we give the Bill its Third Reading, we want assurances from the Minister that he will be supportive and sympathetic to the training of motor cyclists. Under clause 6 as drafted, that will be impossible. I want to hear that there will be regulations to allow motorcyclists to ride to and from centres before they have received their proper licences. If that does not happen, the training exercise will fall flat on its face and we shall fail in our objective.

11.33 pm

Mr. Cryer: I am disappointed that the Minister was not prepared to allow the statutory involvement of the local authorities in the autoguide system set out in part II of the Bill.

These provisions will remain in force until further legislation is produced for our approval, and it would have been useful to allow the local authorities to be involved from the start. That could perhaps have been done by regulation at the discretion of the Minister; at least that would have been a good basis on which to build for the future.

The Minister said that he wanted to make traffic better for local residents, and that he thought that autoguide would help to achieve that aim. Local authorities are involved in making traffic better for local residents. Traffic is one of the cornerstones of local councillors' involvement and the representations that are made to them, and local councillors of any political party ignore representations about traffic hazards at their peril. I have made representations about Manchester road in my constituency, because old people cannot cross that busy trunk road. Even that local authority—a Tory-controlled local authority—says that it simply does not have the money at the moment for a scheme that it wants to institute because it has a high priority as a traffic improvement measure. That local authority is of roughtly the same political complexion as the Minister. Bradford council is, of course, rather Right-wing, whereas the Minister considers himself to be a softy in the centre——

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No—Right-wing.

Mr. Cryer: The Minister corrects me. He is Right-wing under the so-called "liberal" image. However, although the council and the Minister are Right-wing extremists, even Bradford council is complaining that it is not getting money from a Right-wing extremist Minister to carry out road improvements. If the Minister's aim is to make traffic better for local residents, surely his priority should be not to spend Civil Service time in producing a scheme which inevitably, although private money is involved in financing it, will cost the taxpayer money in its drawing up and administration, in conjunction with the private consortia. His job should have been to get more money out of the Treasury to give to local authorities.

The Minister obviously holds local authorities in some disregard. If he held them in proper regard, he would obtain money for them for improving traffic schemes, such as the scheme I have mentioned, which would enable local people living near the road to cross in greater safety. Many of them are elderly people who are hesitant to use an underpass about half a mile away, particularly at night. They are apprehensive about using poorly lit corridors at night because of the threats they seem to hold.

The Minister's first priority should be to get money from the Treasury for local authrities. His second should be to give local authorities some means of being involved in the application of these schemes. Failure to do so will lead to a build-up of resentment not only among ordinary citizens who are concerned about the encroachment of traffic, but among Conservative councillors, who feel that they should be better consulted and better involved, rather than having simply a nominal involvement in a supervisory committee which has no statutory basis.

As the Minister knows, Ministers come and go. With a reshuffle in the offing, it is conceivable that some Ministers at the Department of Transport will go. A Minister who gives an assurance here that he understands the position of local authorities and will ensure that their non-statutory involvement is retained does not guarantee the position for

other Ministers. The position can be eroded overnight "at a stroke," to use a phrase from the past of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who used to wield such influence in the Tory party. Whatever platitude one wants to use, there is nothing to beat putting provisions in a Bill so that they become law. Local authorities know where they stand, citizens can have recourse and Ministers cannot renege on a previous Minister's commitment. That is the important point, so I am sorry that the Minister was not prepared to be more accommodating to the sensible propositions put forward tonight.

11.38 pm

Mr. Cohen: The Bill is called the Road Traffic (Driver Licensing and Information Systems) Bill. It is no coincidence that as well as including provisions for driver information systems in the Bill, the Government also brought out "Primary Route Signing in London—Proposals for Change", a nice, glossy leaflet which talked about the £35 million lost because signs are not provided properly for motorists around London. Yet when I raised with the Minister whether the signing would take into account being able to enforce a heavy lorry ban, which the Metropolitan police say that they cannot enforce because of inadequate signs in London, he said that that was not the purpose of the glossy leaflet. He said that although taxpayers' cash would be used to improve signposting, there would be no heavy lorry ban in London. That idea should have been incorporated not only in the proposal to improve road signs, but in the road traffic driver information system because heavy lorries should not go down residential streets at unsociable hours. I hope that the Minister will return to that point at some stage.

The Bill is also supposed to be about road safety and the Minister has referred to it as a Bill to help avoid accidents. Getting rid of accidents is a key part of the Minister's case for the Bill. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has said, the Minister has refused to include in the Bill provisions on eyesight and medical fitness tests for drivers. The House will have to return to that point at some stage. We must have eyesight testing. It should be free and should certainly not discriminate on the basis of the wealth or income of the motorist.

I refer again to coaches in connection with this point about accidents. If coaches were on the autoguide system, there might be more accidents involving coaches in residential roads. I remind the House of the terrible accident last week in which a couple of people were killed. Hon. Members will have seen the amazing photographs of the car that was crushed down to 3 ft. The person inside it survived while people on the coach died through being flung about.

I had hoped that the Minister would bring forward on Report proposals for seat belts for all passengers in all coaches. I know that the Minister cannot insert such provisions in the Bill now, but I hope that he will come back to this point because it is serious——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that we are now on Third Reading and that he must discuss what is in the Bill.

Mr. Cohen: Yes, I appreciate that. On this point, the Bill refers to rat running or the potential for rat running on the part of the Autoguide company. As my hon. Friends have said, that is why it is vital that the local authorities should have been and should continue to be consulted fully before such systems are installed in their areas.

I broadly welcome the autoguide system for route guidance. We should take advantage of what new technology can provide for drivers. However, the serious snags should be sorted out at the outset. Local authorities must have a role in deciding the routes. It is all very well for the Minister to say that local authorities can still make their traffic management schemes, but Autoguide Limited might take local authorities to court if they tried to impose restrictions on it. Such companies could argue a case of restraint of trade if they could not use whatever roads they like.

We know that in privatisations Conservative Members always stress that restrictions should be removed from private companies so that they can do what they like. They say that that will be of benefit. However, such freedom from restrictions will not benefit the local residents of the areas where the rat running is taking place. Local authorities should have been involved because Autoguide Limited will be responsive to its customers, the motorists, but not to the residents, who are the key group that the local authorities are there to protect.

I shall not repeat all that has been said about civil liberties except to say that the autoguide system contains the potential for abuse in tracing motorists' movements, thus invading the privacy of innocent motorists.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) said, the appalling congestion in central London—and, for example, in Islington and in Leyton High road, all around the Green Man roundabout—is an indictment of the Government's policies. That congestion has occurred without a rail dispute, so it is no use blaming it on that. It was there today and it will be there the day after the rail dispute. Autoguide will do nothing to alleviate the position; indeed, it will encourage more car use. Although I welcome the new technology, I think that we should have been sorting out the snags at this stage. However, we will have to come back and deal with them.

11.45 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley: With the leave of the House I shall reply.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) mentioned motor cycling. Compulsory training will be introduced only when there is adequate nationwide coverage of training centres. The Bill provides for regulations giving exemptions from compulsory training to persons in prescribed circumstances and areas.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Does my hon. Friend accept that there could be a trade-off bringing in a system relatively early, which would be in the interests of safer motor cycling, and having sufficiently broad regulations to allow certain exemptions? Unless there are reasonable exemptions, it might not be possible to introduce a scheme as early as one would wish.

Mr. Bottomley: That is correct. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for intervening at this stage, because I know that, if provoked, he could equal the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) in exploring the issues at great length.

[Mr. Bottomley]

I pay tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Dumfries and for Keighley (Mr. Waller) for their motor cycling interests.

The power is already in the Bill to provide exemptions from compulsory training—for example, for those residents of some Scottish islands and of the Scilly Isles where there are no training facilities. We shall be looking for a balance between trying to get the benefits of initial training for as many people as possible as soon as possible, while trying to remember the practical disadvantages for those for whom it is difficult to have proper provision. Those are points on which the Government will wish to keep an open mind.

In Bradford, while it was under the control of both political parties, central Government have given very substantial help to improve the road network, for which I believe the people of Bradford are grateful. A through road allows traffic calming in many other areas. That in essence overrides what autoguide will be doing. I remind the House that the autoguide provisions bring in a system of licensing and do not abolish one. On those grounds, I believe that it will be greatly welcomed.

Although it is not within the Bill, I want to say a word about the terrible coach crash on the A286 just north of Midhurst. I visited the scene and I think that it would be wrong for any of us to prejudge the cause. However, I want to repeat the advice that I gave at the scene, which is that anyone sitting on the exposed seat of the coach would be well advised to use another seat or, if one is fitted, to use a seat belt. The House has made it a requirement that all new coaches should have seat belts on those front seats. It is also worth noting that, had that coach been built 15 or 20 years ago, it would have collapsed in the crash—it did not.

On general road safety points, I would say that if some hon. Members, especially Opposition Members, go on wanting things that do not work, and opposing the things that do work, we will not see the continued reduction in road casualties of which the country can be proud.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 145, Noes 11.

Division No. 279] **[11.48 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hawkins, Christopher
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Meale, Alan
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Skinner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

PETITIONS

Badgers

11.59 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): The petition, signed by J. Barrington, A. E. Smith, J. M. Bryant, S. E. Rocks, N. Couldry and P. A. Mingo concerns itself with petitioning against the facts that badger setts in the United Kingdom continue to be frequently attacked by persons using spades and terriers, and that the Badgers Act 1973 does not

include provisions for the confiscation of dogs or for disqualification from keeping dogs as penalties for convicted badger baiters.

The petition contains more than 100,000 signatures collected by the League Against Cruel Sports, plus another 400 in support provided by the borough of Cheltenham and its local paper the *Gloucestershire Echo*.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will take all such measures as lie within their power,

1. to protect badger setts from unlicensed damage or destruction.

2. to provide courts with the powers for the confiscation of dogs and disqualification from keeping dogs as penalties for those convicted of using dogs in offences against badgers.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

12 midnight

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): A petition from Mr. J. E. Hicks and 100,000 others:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of Citizens of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Sheweth:—

1. that badger setts continue to be frequently attacked by persons using spades and terriers.

2. that the Badgers Act 1973 does not include provisions for the confiscation of dogs or disqualification for keeping dogs as penalties for convicted badger baiters.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will take all such measures as lie within their power,

1. to protect badger setts from unlicensed damage or destruction.

2. to provide courts with the powers for the confiscation of dogs and disqualification from keeping dogs as penalties for those convicted of using dogs in offences against badgers.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

EC Institutions

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

12.1 am

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise in the House the question of the relationships between these Houses of Parliament and the European Economic Community institutions.

I am also grateful that so many of my hon. Friends have thought it worth spending another half an hour in the House after a long day debating the many Bills that have come before us. It is a sign of how important these issues are to hon. Members that they are prepared to stay after midnight when such items traditionally come up for debate. I am also grateful to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who will be answering the debate.

These issues have gained great prominence in recent weeks as a result of a hard-fought European election campaign for the European Parliament and the acceleration in pace of the measures now coming before the various national Parliaments of the EC member states as the 1992 endeavour gathers momentum.

I am one of those who welcome the 1992 proposals. I have always wished to see the creation of a genuinely common market with freer trading between the member states and beyond the boundaries of the European Community into the wider world.

That process will create much greater prosperity and it is the free enterprise system worldwide which is now demonstrating just how much it can do by way of giving people freedoms, liberties, choices, a better standard of living and better moral and spiritual choices than the totalitarian systems that have been on offer in the post-war world.

The citizens of western countries can turn to their flexible friend, the Barclaycard, to assert their right to purchase a wide variety of goods and services of their choice, supplied in a competitive market place by their fellow citizens in their roles as employees, employers and entrepreneurs in a host of businesses; whereas in eastern Europe and the other totalitarian regimes, rather than turn to the Barclaycard, people can only clutch the ration book and queue at the local state shop to see what tawdry goods might be available for however many hours they might have to wait to get any goods at all. There will be little choice, little joy, and little opportunity to enjoy the benefits of enterprise, because enterprise is stifled where freedoms are stifled.

Much remains to be done to realise the vision of a genuinely open and free market in Europe. I am glad that the Government and my right hon. Friend the Minister who is to reply have been in the forefront of many moves to deregulate European markets and in carrying on the task of creating the conditions in which more trade, commerce and entrepreneurial activity can flourish.

The most recent report shows that we are only at the halfway stage. Out of the 279 measures that comprise the 1992 enterprise, half remain to be drawn up and to go through all the procedures necessary for agreement on them to be reached. There should be greater mutual recognition of the need to speed the process of gaining acceptability of them by all member states, rather than concentration on harmonisation for harmonisation's sake

[Mr. John Redwood]

and trying to construct the perfect Euro-product or service —when it would be reasonable to accept each other's products and services and the diversity of the market places that they imply, in order to improve trade and to achieve greater prosperity.

I believe that the European Community now recognises that need, and there is evidence that faster progress is being made with introducing the various measures through greater use of mutual acceptance rather than harmonised standards. There is also some understanding that in some areas it is not always possible to develop the perfect, single, Community-unified answer—as with patents and patent offices, for example—and that it may be necessary to proceed through better understanding of the differences that exist in member states.

Britain is in the forefront of liberalising capital movements, in insisting on deregulation of the telecommunications market, and in arguing strongly for the deregulation of air traffic in tackling the scandal of air fares in Europe being so much higher than those for travelling comparable distances in the United States of America. It has also campaigned for the benefits of deregulation to be enjoyed by the abolition of lorry quotas, and for changes in cabotage arrangements in shipping and in public purchasing—where a whole range of items should be open to competitive tendering and purchasing across frontiers.

We shall know that the Common Market has truly arrived when we see French civil servants travelling round in Nissans built in the United Kingdom, or the German public able to buy British insurance policies. In the same way our country will benefit from many of the goods produced in other member states.

It is a great task, and the Government should concentrate the Commission's mind on ensuring that 1992 is delivered before other, larger steps are attempted towards the creation of a more unified European state—the creation of a federal state.

Among the problems to be confronted is the legislative backlog. Although the Community has made progress with many of the directives necessary to complete the 1992 endeavour, many more remain unimplemented. Of the last 68 directives that have been through all the processes to become good European law from the point of view of the European institutions, only two have been carried into effect by national processes and Parliaments to become effective in the territories of the Community's member states. That only two out of 68 directives should have done so is a sign of the size of the task, and of how much needs to be done even to implement the work completed so far.

Britain is the best of all member states at implementing and enforcing directives, and others need to be persuaded —by negotiation and perhaps diplomacy—by member nations watching their behaviour that, if the Common Market is to mean anything, the directives must not only be approved and passed but enforced in every territory. Italy in particular has a long way to go before it reaches the standards achieved by this country.

The Commission and the European institutions are also selective in the way in which they look at the treaty provisions. The way in which some of the federal ambitions of the European institutions are being developed lies in picking on a particular clause in the treaty and deciding that it provides cover for an extension of powers that was never knowingly or willingly granted by the member nations, through their original treaty obligations, or by the member states' Parliaments through their understanding of the workings of the original treaty and the Single European Act.

Yet there are other extremely important clauses in the treaty that seem to go unenforced. I am thinking particularly of articles 104 to 109—important articles relating to balance of payments disequilibria. The intention of the treaty is clear: member states should not run large balance of payments deficits or surpluses, especially not with one another, and action should be taken to tackle such imbalances.

Anyone considering the problem of European trade between member states would immediately spot one large structural problem: the German surplus. I have written to the Commission, and have been told that it is a difficult problem and one which the Commission would not like to tackle under the treaty articles, because it is too busy tackling others under other treaty articles. The existence of the exchange rate mechanism, with the particular parities chosen for the deutschmark, may be one of the causes of the persistent German surplus with almost all the other member states; the mechanism may be an actual violation of articles 104 to 109, which clearly state that balance of payments disequilibria must be dealt with promptly and recognise that monetary and currency measures may be required as part of a package to deal with the problem.

I welcome the Commission's attempt in recent years to enforce articles 92 and 93 on state aids. Important work can be done to ensure fair trade between member states, and that means that the subsidies paid to certain industries —espcially certain public enterprises—need to be rolled back, so that it is fair for an entrepreneurial business in Britain to compete with a nationalised enterprise in France in the knowledge that the latter will not be unduly favoured by massive subsidy or other protection. The Commission has taken welcome steps in that direction in some recent cases. I hope that the British Government will demand that those articles are strictly enforced, and that the unfair trading practices that remain are given greater prominence when the Commission does its work to see that competition is triumphant.

What concerns the House most is, of course, the problem of scrutiny, and our Parliament faces a severe difficulty in that regard. Matters often come before the House late, when positions have already been adopted by British Ministers attending the Council of Ministers, and common positions may have been adopted in Europe itself. The House is then in the invidious position of having to debate a matter on which a decision has effectively been made, and nothing can be done. I hope that, when reviewing scrutiny procedures, the Government will take seriously all the comments by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House who would like such matters to be debated before common positions have been adopted.

I also feel that the Government should recognise that the matters now coming before us under the 1992 programme are of huge importance. For instance, the items in the second banking directive and the other directives relating to an open market in financial services may well entail the revision or replacement of great chunks of legislation passed by the House in comparatively recent

years. They are major items which deserve prime time debate, and I am sure that hon. Members in all parts of the House would agree with that.

It is important in reviewing scrutiny to remember from where the authority for many of these mesures comes. There has been discussion recently about exactly what was said—at the time of our entry into the European Community and at the time of the Single European Act—about where decision-making power did truly lie and about where sovereignty might rest. I have been examining what was said in the debates to see what the country and the House were told on those momentous occasions when big decisions were taken, both to enter and to modify the constitutional position under the Single European Act.

In 1971, in the debate on entry, the then Foreign Secretary said that great countries with the history of the European nations could not be "dragooned or coerced" into a pattern of political association which one or other of them did not like. He went on to make the case that there always had to be the protection of major national interests under the treaty agreements.

The present Lord Rippon of Hexham, who had put through the individual terms of entry, speaking about the legislation required to join the European Community, was even stronger in his tone. He said clearly that nothing in the measure "abridges the ultimate sovereignty" of Parliament, and he went on to say that there was no question of the measure setting up our entry into the EC making a thousand years of British law "subservient to the Code Napoleon." He reminded the House that it would always have a right of veto.

In 1986, the Minister who will reply tonight put to the House the arguments for the Single European Act, allowing majority decisions to be taken on those items essential to the 1992 programme. In that debate, she said it was only a limited extension of majority voting which would apply only to those issues required for the 1992 programme. She went on to say that it would not lead to a federal union. She reminded the House that the Luxembourg accord or compromise remained in place completely untouched and unaffected by those proposals going through as the Single European Act.

I was, therefore, grateful when my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) introduced a Bill recently to reaffirm the importance of our commitment to the European Community and to remind the House of the scope and limits of competence set down under the treaties and the Single European Act. That Bill does much to remind us that the ultimate power to make proposals from Europe comes from this House, freely granted under treaty and by amendment under the Single European Act.

It reminds us that those powers are constrained and that it is important for the British Government not to allow those powers to be extended by abuse by the European Commission, when it was clear that the intention of the House was to allow majority voting to speed the 1992 process, which we welcome, but not to speed other matters, which I believe still require the unanimous approval of all the member states and where national interests should be protected if they are of more importance than the creation of a European solution to a given problem. There will be times when they will not be, and times when they will be, more important.

Can the Minister confirm that the Luxembourg accord is still there and could, in extremis, be used when our national interest warranted it? Does she agree that majority voting applies only to those measures required to create the internal market and 1992? Does that mean that after 1993, if all those measures have gone through and been agreed, majority voting will no longer exist and will need some reaffirmation, by treaty or by Act of Parliament or both, to complete other objectives that were not envisaged at the time of the Single European Act? My reading of it suggests that there would need to be a renewal of powers if majority voting is to be used for purposes other than those itemised in the 279 measures required for 1992.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that at present it is important to complete 1992, that it would be a distraction to try to negotiate tax harmonisation or a social charter and that this country is not yet ready to amend the treaties to allow majority voting or new powers over taxation and over the movement of peoples and employee rights that would be required if the Commission wished to proceed by majority, rather than unanimity, on those sensitive matters of taxation and important items in the social charter?

Finally, does my right hon. Friend agree that it might be helpful to the British negotiating position over the social charter if, while making the point that this country does not believe that these matters are best handled at the European level and that they are better handled at national level, she used her ministerial position to present an alternative social charter to our European partners which contained illustrative ideas that might be useful in their countries, just as they have proved to be useful here?

In the hope that my right hon. Friend might find it helpful, I have given some thought to the type of items that could be included, but time will not permit me—hon. Members will be distraught to learn—to give a detailed exegesis of what they might be. However, they would include the work that this country has done on wider share ownership, on providing people with options over savings for retirement and the purchase of shares in the companies for which they work. It should certainly include the option that individuals ought to be able to buy their own home—whether it be a flat or a house in municipal or Government ownership in member country states—at a discount, since that has been one of our most successful social policies. I think that it would be very helpful if a similar right were to be granted to the citizens of other member states. It might also include health care rights similar to those that are provided by our National Health Service. It should certainly include trade union legislation similar to that which has been so successfully pioneered in this country.

As always in the House, the clock is against me, so I shall conclude my remarks.

12.22 am

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) and the Minister for allowing me to make four points.

First, I endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham has said and I congratulate him on the way in which he dealt with the subject.

Secondly, since the passing of the Single European Act there is the opportunity, if we believe that it may be possible in future to amend the treaty, to consider adjusting the role of the Commission as against that of the Council of Ministers to ensure that we maintain a fully democratic Europe by putting due emphasis on the role of

[Mr. William Cash]

national Parliaments and nationally elected representatives who are responsible for discharging their duty to their constituents in matters affecting both the domestic and the European sphere.

Thirdly, there are those who say that we who take the view that we should not move to a federal Europe are living in the late 1960s or late 1970s. I take the view that we are the people who are living in the late 20th century by matching up to the challenges of the global village that we now occupy. It is those who base their argument on the position as it has evolved since the 1950s who are guilty of an anachronism. We are the ones who are living in the world of today. I believe firmly that our view will prevail.

Lastly, I refer briefly to the European Court of Justice and to an interesting article by Mr. Mann in the journal of the Institute of International and Comparative Law in April of this year, which I encourage hon. Members to read. He makes it quite clear, as does Mr. T. C. Hartley, that where there are grey areas in the treaty of Rome there is a very strong tendency for the European Court of Justice to adopt the policy of political integration. As Mr. Mann put it, to paraphrase him, it simply does not listen. We must be extremely wary about that.

I do not have the time in which to develop those points, but I hope that the Minister will refer to them in her reply.

12.23 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) for bringing this important issue before the House. I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) for his remarks.

The debate is both welcome and timely, coming so soon after the European elections and the Madrid summit. The relationship between this House and the Community institutions goes to the heart of our membership of the Community. We must ensure that the proper concerns of this House can be brought to bear on all EC-related measures in a way which is satisfactory to the House.

I should like this evening to mention the recent changes in decision making in the EC institutions, to which both my hon. Friends have referred, and then to focus on the role of Parliament in this process, with respect to the scrutiny procedure—which is a matter of concern to many hon. Members—and to the role and competence of Community institutions.

The Government believe that the decision-making process in the Community is working satisfactorily. The good progress that is being made on the single market programme is ample testimony to that fact. This is an area of policy in which the United Kingdom has been in the lead. I thoroughly agree with my hon. Friend that it is an area of priority, and it must remain so.

The House is aware that more than half the measures in the Commission's White Paper of 1985 have already been agreed. The Spanish presidency which has just finished achieved the very creditable record of agreement on 68 measures. That is no small achievement.

The progress was made possible only by the political impetus given by the Single European Act. Majority voting was vital for that. In the Single European Act, we provided for qualified majority voting where we want it, while retaining unanimity where we need it—on taxation, free movement of people and employment matters, for example.

My hon. Friend asked whether I believe that majority voting will be needed once the single market measures have been completed. It would be rather sweeping to say that it might never be needed, because some existing measures, in the light of greater trading outside the Community—say with European Free Trade Association partners—might have to be revised. We must therefore keep qualified majority voting on the statute book, but it must be limited to the areas that were defined in the Single European Act.

If we are to create a genuine common market—the treaty of Rome set us the target more than 30 years ago—we must continue the process of deregulation and liberalisation, as my hon. Friend said. He made that quite clear in his recent paper for the Centre for Policy Studies. It is essential that we take that route and do not take no for an answer. The single market programme is consistent with the deregulatory philosophy which the Government have so successfully put through in Britain—1992 is very much a British song, but it is now being sung throughout the Community and in many other places. That is a measure of the success of Britain's deregulatory and liberalising policies of the past 10 years.

With the extension of majority voting, the Single European Act introduced the co-operation procedure to allow the European Parliament to play a more active role in the decision-making process. I believe that the operation of the new arrangements has produced a smoother inter-institutional process than there was before the Single European Act. Of course, we are still learning from that process, and we must have more contact and more exchange of views between hon. Members and Members of the Strasbourg Parliament.

We must always remember that there has been no significant change in the institutional balance. The power of final decision remains firmly with the Council of Ministers. That is fundamental to the institutional structure of the Community, and it is of direct relevance to the role of the House because Ministers acting in the Council of Ministers are directly accountable to the House, and so it must ever remain.

As I said in the debates in 1986, the Luxembourg compromise remains unaltered. We have made it absolutely clear that, when there is a vital national interest, a nation must be able to avoid being out-voted. That protects the very basis on which we joined the European Community.

The main theme of the debate is the role of the House. I see the need for proper parliamentary scrutiny of decisions taken by the Government in the Council of Ministers and for all legislation to remain at the national level unless there is good reason to tackle the issue at Community level. The Government attach the greatest importance to scrutiny of proposed EC legislation at Westminster. One or two other Parliaments have recently modelled themselves on what we are trying to do here. Nobody has said that it is perfect. A number of parliamentary committees are investigating the matter, and the Lord President of the Council is going into it in great detail. The Scrutiny Committee considers some 800 documents a year, sifting out fewer than 100 for further consideration. I pay tribute to the Committee for its assiduous work. Overall, the system works well, but we are trying to improve it.

We want to avoid unnecessary legislation at EC level. My hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham has drawn attention to attempts to extend Community competence —a matter of concern to many hon. Members. I assure my hon. Friend that the Government are alive to the problem. We shall continue to examine all proposals for Community legislation to ensure that they are necessary to achieve the objectives of the treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act, and that they are in the areas for which there is Community competence we must, however, keep that in perspective. On much Community legislation, the technical question of legal competence does not arise.

Our concern is not so much with competence as with the related but separate concept of subsidiarity. It means that action should be taken at Community level only when it cannot be undertaken as well, or better, at national, or even local, level. The House will be aware that this doctrine is frequently propounded by none other than the President of the Commission. There is a clear reference to subsidiarity in the Delors report on European monetary union and, more important, it was endorsed by the Heads of Government at two separate points in the Madrid European Council conclusions, on monetary and social issues.

We sometimes find new policy proposals objectionable on subsidiarity grounds, not because they break new ground for Community competence in the legal sense. We can get this right by sound vigilance. That is the way that we intend to go. I have noted——

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-nine minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 5 July 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

WESLEYAN ASSURANCE SOCIETY BILL

Lords amendments agreed to.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Economy

1. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the general secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the Scottish economy.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I met the general secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress on 30 June.

Mr. Robertson: Next time the Secretary of State meets the general secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, he will find him, like so many other people in Scotland, deeply concerned at the paralysis that has hit the Scottish Development Agency due to the cash crisis that it faces. Is he aware that many projects in my constituency and in many others are being hit by the funding crisis? Will he ensure that the agency immediately receives the funds it requires to retain its credibility among the Scottish people and to create the jobs that Scotland so deeply needs?

Mr. Rifkind: When I met the general secretary of the STUC a few days ago, he did not raise that subject, but emphasised that he thought that the Government's proposals for merging the SDA with the Training Agency were a splendid idea, and that he and his colleagues looked forward to welcoming those proposals in the coming weeks and months. The SDA receives healthy funding, provided by the Government, and as a consequence is involved in a number of major projects around Scotland.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the TUC should be happy about jobs in Scotland? Will he confirm that Scotland's unemployment rate is lower than that of most of our European partners, including France, Belgium, Holland, Spain and Italy?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, that is correct. Although unemployment in Scotland is still far higher than any of us would wish to see, it has fallen by more than 100,000 in the past two years. As my hon. Friend rightly says, it is lower than the level to be found in at least five other countries in the European Community—France, Italy, Spain, Belgium and Ireland.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister will have seen the reports showing that £400,000 of the £3·7 million of public money that was put into the Wang project in Stirling is to be repaid. It that true? Will he also comment on the stories that Intel, a Californian company, may be interested in the plant? Does he believe that there is a realistic prospect of finding a buyer to take over the plant as a going concern? Does he accept that there must have been something very wrong with his Department's monitoring system when Wang so signally failed to meet its targets at Stirling and he was left with only one week's notice of the decision to decamp?

Mr. Rifkind: On the final point, Wang received financial assistance from the Government under the same criteria as that provided by former Labour Governments. It was precisely because of the difficulties that that created in the past that the Government changed the criteria in 1984. As regards the hon. Gentleman's other points, Wang has indicated that some repayment to the Government might be appropriate. I share the hon. Gentleman's deep interest in finding an alternative user for the site, but I earnestly suggest that at this stage speculation about who that potential user might be is not in the interests of Stirling or of investment in the area.

Standard Grade Development Programme

3. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the funding of the Government's standard grade development programme, particularly in relation to technological studies, computing studies and office information studies.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): To date, more than £37 million has been spent or provided for specifically for standard grade. This includes more than £9 million within local authorities' capital allocations for the purchase of scientific and technological equipment.

Mr. Dunnachie: It is obvious that the Minister has not met senior education officials in Strathclyde, who have expressed to me their grave concern about the severe underfunding of these important subjects in education and have asked me to ask the Minister to think again and to put money into these subjects so as to allow the young people of Scotland to be trained so as to enable them to compete in the new industries that are supposed to be coming to Scotland. Those education officials tell me that if they do not get the money they will view the future of those subjects with grave concern.

Mr. Forsyth: I am surprised that the education authorities are making their representations through the hon. Gentleman. The Scottish Education Department has received no representations of the kind that he has described. The education authorities have had substantial provision. If the Educational Institute of Scotland is worried about standard grade, it should address its criticisms in the first instance to the education authorities, to which adequate provision has been made.

I should say in defence of the Educational Institute of Scotland that its executive took a different position from

that of its conference and opposed any boycott of standard grade. It is unfortunate that the annual general meeting took such a view, and I hope that the teachers who have implemented standard grade so successfully will continue to make a contribution.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Minister accept that there is an important role in all this for the Scottish Council for Educational Technology? Will he therefore ensure that it is properly resourced, including proper funding for the Scottish central film library and the Scottish film archives, which have made a major contribution to technology in our time?

Mr. Forsyth: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government have been sensitive to the needs of the Scottish film industry. I recall the hon. Gentleman telling me privately how pleased he was at the Government's announcement following our review. I am sorry that he is not prepared to say publicly in the House what he was prepared to say privately—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Clarke: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have never at any time——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Gentleman wish to raise the matter on the Adjournment?

Mr. Clarke: When a Minister——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This all takes time out of other hon. Members' questions.

Mr. Clarke: The Minister has clearly misunderstood the meetings which took place about the Scottish Film Council and has confused it with the Scottish central film library. I believe that that was a genuine misunderstanding and that he should withdraw what he said.

Community Charge

4. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of single parents in Scotland are gaining from the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Rifkind: It is estimated that some 80 per cent. of single parents are better off under the community charge than they would be under the domestic rating system.

Mr. Harris: I welcome that answer, but does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that an even higher percentage—85 per cent.—of pensioners stand to benefit from the introduction of the community charge? Do not those two sets of figures amount to further evidence of the inherent fairness of the community charge compared with the present rating system?

Mr. Rifkind: That is undoubtedly true. It is also particularly welcome because single pensioners and single parents can be found among those with the lowest incomes in our society. The fact that they overwhelmingly benefit as a result of the change in the system of local taxation is, as my hon. Friend says, another vindication of that change.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Minister have a care about his use of words? The question was about gaining. How can he suggest that single parents or anyone on a low income will gain from the imposition of the poll tax? Will he also consider the huge cost of the tax to Scotland? It costs £30 million to £40 million more than the rates. What a burden that is, and what an intrusion it is on people's civil liberties.

Mr. Rifkind: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman with his oft-proclaimed interest in the well-being of the poorer sections of our community would be the first, if he wished to be seen as an objective commentator on these matters, to welcome the fact that 85 per cent. of single pensioners and 80 per cent. of single parents pay less now than they would be paying if domestic rates were still in force.

Mr. Douglas: They are not gaining.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman may not like the facts, but he will have to live with them.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that single parents in Dundee are not getting the full benefit and advantage of the community charge because since 1983 Dundee district council has paid the salary of Mr. Jim White, a full-time official of NALGO, who brought about the strike and has caused terrible inconvenience to single parent? Is that not a further example of why the community charge is far higher than it should be, and a factor which may be prevalent throughout Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: Undoubtedly, factors of the kind to which my hon. Friend refers have led to the consequences that he has described. I should have thought that anyone interested in the well-being of the community would wish to discourage any action by local authority officials or others which would have that effect. The vast majority of local authority officials are carrying out their responsibilities diligently and with due consideration for the important matters to which my hon. Friend has referred.

Mr. Maxton: Is not the only reason why single parents are marginally better off this year than they were last year the iniquitous 20 per cent. minimum payment that the Government imposed on those who are hardest up in our society? If the Secretary of State is so keen on statistics, why does he not tell us the percentage of people earning more than £25,000 per year who are considerably better off as a result of the poll tax?

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) for rebuking the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) and confirming that single parents and single pensioners are better off. That is the most eloquent denunciation yet of the nonsense that we have heard from some Opposition Members.

Rural Housing

5. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of Scottish Homes to discuss the development of a rural housing strategy.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): The development of Scottish Homes' rural strategy was one of the issues discussed formally when I met Sir James Mellon, chairman of Scottish Homes, on 23 June.

Mr. Wallace: When the Under-Secretary of State spoke in the Scottish Grand Committee last week about homelessness, one remedy that he did not describe was building more houses. Given that homelessness is as much a rural as an urban problem, and that the amount

allocated by Scottish Homes to housing associations in the north of Scotland will scarcely allow for any new projects to be brought on stream in the next year, what steps do the Government intend to take to give more support to housing associations so that they can fulfil the important task of building and providing housing?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have good news for the hon. Member. Orkney housing association has been allocated £850,000 this year—the largest allocation since its formation. Moreover, programme expenditure for the north region is no less than £44 million for 1988-89. I fully expect the rural strategy now being worked out by Scottish Homes to be in place by May next year. That strategy will point the way to more houses being built in areas where they are most needed. We expect that in Scotland as a whole between 3,000 and 4,000 houses will be completed this year.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in terms of rural and urban housing, the Loreburn housing association has carried out exceptionally good work in Dumfries and Galloway? Will he do everything possible to approve its exciting new scheme at Nithsdale mills, even it if means the demolition of a Victorian mill?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can confirm that the performance of Loreburn housing association has been extremely impressive. Its application to pull down the building to which my hon. Friend refers is currently with Dumfries and Galloway regional council, which is the planning authority. The application will be considered this month. If it is approved, the decision will be notified to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State as the building is listed, but the matter will be processed as quickly as possible thereafter.

Community Charge

6. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland are on poll tax registers; and how many of them have not so far paid at least the first instalment.

Mr. Rifkind: It is estimated that almost 99 per cent. of the adult population have been registered. It will be some while yet before reliable information on payment levels becomes available from local authorities. The current indications are that local authorities are satisfied with the progress so far made in collecting community charges.

Mr. Canavan: Is the Secretary of State seriously telling us that the staff of 10,000 at the Scottish office are insufficient to make a dozen telephone calls to the regional and islands councils to obtain the figures needed for a full and accurate reply to a parliamentary question? Or is there, perhaps, a political reason for his refusal to reveal the whole truth about the number of non-payers? Does he admit that if it became public knowledge that several hundred thousand people in Scotland were refusing to pay the poll tax, more and more people would join the non-payment campaign, which is the only realistic way to defeat the poll tax and stop it being foisted on the people of Scotland by a discredited Government?

Mr. Rifkind: If there is a political reason, I must say that it is a very odd one. I understand that Strathclyde regional councillors have yet to be informed by their own officials of the level of collection in the region. The hon. Gentleman never likes to admit that he is pursuing a lost cause. His views on this have been repudiated by his own party—and, indeed, by the general public, the Scottish Trades Union Congress and a large number of other Scottish organisations—but he can continue to whistle in the dark.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Is it not disgraceful that the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) should support a campaign which argues that people should not pay their lawful dues to society when the legislation has been passed by a democratically elected House of Commons? What do Labour Members think would happen if Conservatives took the same attitude when a Labour Government were in power? Is it not also outrageous that well-heeled Opposition Members should refuse to pay their dues to the community whose services they receive?

Mr. Rifkind: It is not unusual for either the hard Left of the Labour party or the SNP to give itself the right to decide which laws it should observe and which it should not.

Mrs. Ray Michie: Is the Secretary of State not disturbed by the increasing use of pinding and warrant sales as a method of collecting poll tax?

Mr. Rifkind: It is very much up to local authorities to decide which procedure they should apply. As the House well knows, major reforms have been made to the warrant sales system, leading to the removal of all the features of that system that were causing concern to both sides of the House. Those who are owed the community charge and have not received it are clearly entitled to use such methods as they think appropriate under the law.

NHS Reform

7. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received expressing support for his review of the National Health Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Most submissions on the White Paper "Working for Patients" have shown strong support for certain proposals and have questioned others.

Mr. Ross: That reply beggars belief. The Minister must concede that there is hardly anyone on whom he can call for support. According to a recent Gallup poll, not even the Conservative party supports what he is doing to the National Health Service. Is it not about time that he withdrew this nonsensical review—at least in respect of Scotland—and got down to serious discussions with people in the Health Service about trying to create a better service rather than trying to fragment it?

Mr. Forsyth: I beg to differ with the hon. Gentleman. Even the British Medical Association supports our proposals for a medical audit, money following patients and resource management. As for the public and those who depend on the Health Service as a whole, there is widespread support for our measures to reduce waiting lists, to ensure that people are given appointments on which they can rely and that they see a consultant, to make it easier for patients to change doctors and to extend patient choice.

The opinion poll to which the hon. Gentleman referred represents a public view on the White Paper as presented by the BMA and the Government's opponents, which is a long way from any proposals that we have presented. If the hon. Gentleman has studied the poll and our proposals, he will know that the Government have no intention of privatising the National Health Service.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: Will the Minister acknowledge that there has been massive and united opposition to his proposals from general practitioners in my constituency, who are against the proposal to create a poorer and less effective National Health Service? When will he start to acknowledge that there is massive public disapproval of his plans, as well as professional disapproval? This is a democracy. When will the Minister stop dictating to the people and start to understand what they are saying and do something about it?

Mr. Forsyth: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman has a word with some of the GPs in Angus district. One GP who has come forward as a volunteer to run a pilot scheme —*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members should not mock. The BMA itself suggested that pilot schemes would be a good idea. That GP, who came into my office to volunteer as a result of representations by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), practises in Angus. He believes that his proposals will result in better services for the patients on his list, and we shall see if we are able to take them forward.

Mr. Frank Field: As health expenditure per person in Scotland is 25 per cent. higher than in England, can the Minister assure the House that, on average, Scottish citizens are 25 per cent. healthier than English citizens? If not, should he not spend his time making sure that his Department devises indices to answer that question rather than ramming through National Health Service reforms, since neither the Government nor anyone else can say whether they will improve or reduce health standards in Scotland, England or Wales?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman. He is right to point out that health expenditure is 25 per cent. higher in Scotland than it is in England. He is also right to point out that health in Scotland is no better as a result. He should address his remarks to his own party, which seems to believe that the problems of the Health Service are entirely—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) is a member of a party which is arguing that the only problems with the Health Service are due to inadequate resources. Yet he has pointed out that although Scotland has been provided with substantial additional resources, health in Scotland is not proportionately better. It is for those reasons that we put forward our White Paper proposals. I welcome the hon. Gentleman as an ally in what we are trying to do in the National Health Service.

Scottish Development Agency

9. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chief executive of the Scottish Development Agency; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Rifkind: I met the agency board, including the chief executive, on 22 May and discussed a range of issues of mutual interest.

Mr. McKelvey: Notwithstanding the reply that the Secretary of State gave to question No. 1 and also to this question, did he have any discussions with the chief executive about the shortfall of funds? Is he aware that in my constituency of Kilmarnock, small Scottish business men with good businesses and good workers are losing out on projects that could have received a grant because spending is ahead of schedule, either as a result of sheer efficiency on our part or because the weather in Scotland is mild at the moment and building work is further ahead than usual? If the Secretary of State could give more money to the Scottish Development Agency now so that those projects could be kept within the plan, he would dispel the fears of those small business men who are losing out and also defeat the wisecrackers who are going about the streets of Kilmarnock suggesting that he has backed the Wang horse.

Mr. Rifkind: I am delighted by the hon. Gentleman's comments. Any suggestion that the SDA is underfunded does not match the facts when one considers what has happened. Total provision for the agency in 1989-90 is £160 million, compared with £147 million last year. The fact that support is being sought for even more projects suggests that economic activity in Scotland is healthy. I have no doubt that the SDA, which has £160 million available to it this year, will be able to respond positively to a very large proportion of company requests which justify support.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, compared with the view of the hon. Member for Kilmarnock (Mr. McKelvey), we in the north-east of Scotland appreciate the work of the Scottish Development Agency and the funding and support that it provides both for major projects, such as Aberdeen Beyond 2000, and for rural projects, such as those to be found in Braemar in my constituency? May I have his assurance that the SDA, contrary to the way in which it acted in the past, will continue to take an interest in activities in areas outside the central belt of Scotland, such as the north-east?

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. Friend is absolutely correct. We have emphasised to the Scottish Development Agency that its remit is for the whole of Scotland and that the north-east in particular is entitled to its fair share of any resources that are available. Some of the criticism that one used to hear a few years ago about the concentration of SDA activity in one particular part of Scotland is now heard much less often. I am delighted that my right hon. Friend is able to confirm that the SDA is supporting projects in his area.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: When the Secretary of State next meets the Scottish Development Agency, will he consider asking it to look into the structure of community businesses, which are developing well in Scotland but which need to be given a new legal status if they are to expand further? Will he also consider whether the SDA might have a role in providing venture capital for new businesses as there is still a gap in the market for venture capital, particularly for those who have ideas and energy but no collateral?

Mr. Rifkind: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman said. I shall be happy to ensure that his ideas are discussed with the SDA, to find out whether there is a gap in its ability to meet that requirement and perhaps it will comment on the points raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take time today to congratulate the director of the national galleries on resuming and restoring the galleries for such a small sum? Will he remind the House— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am no great expert on Scottish matters, but is this a matter for the SDA?

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Will my right hon. and learned Friend remind the House that the Government have provided the funds to enable the work to be done through the SDA because of our economic policies. We have had a decade of regeneration in the arts in Scotland unrivalled by any previous Government.

Mr. Rifkind: I can certainly confirm to my hon. and learned Friend that the restoration and improvements to the national galleries have rightly received wide applause throughout Scotland. It was a remarkable achievement, whether or not the SDA was involved.

Dr. Godman: During his meeting with the chief executive of the SDA, did the Secretary of State establish the reasons for the decision to include three public houses and a betting shop within the boundaries of the Inverclyde enterprise zone? Is it not the case that the two local authorities will lose more than a bob or two over the next 10 years because of that gaff? Given the Secretary of State's ever-ready desire to berate Labour local authorities for their poor financial management, will he now give an assurance that the two councils concerned will not lose any money because of that gaff?

Mr. Rifkind: First, I understand that those particular sites were regarded as potential sites that could be used to attract new investment to Inverclyde. Secondly, it is highly unlikely that local authorities will lose out, because their revenue support grant takes into account their expected revenue. If that revenue goes down, there will be an enhancement of revenue support grant. Thirdly, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will join me in expressing delight at the decision of Crusader to move 300 jobs from Reigate in Surrey to Inverclyde because of the Government's decision to create an enterprise zone there.

Unemployment

10. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the number of unemployed in Scotland *(a)* in June 1983 and *(b)* at the present time.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): Seasonally-adjusted unemployment in Scotland in June 1983 was 300,100, and the figure for May 1989 is 239,800. Unemployment in Scotland has now fallen for 25 months in succession, the longest and largest sustained fall on record.

Mr. Favell: Is it not clear that jobs are now returning to Scotland because the Government have failed to encourage the "the world owes us a free lunch" mentality encouraged by the Opposition, and have encouraged the traditional Scottish virtues of hard work, industrial and commercial innovation and enterprise which have served Scotland, the United Kingdom, the British Commonwealth and the world during previous periods of prosperity? Is it not good to know that the ancient virtues are the best way to serve Scotland?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The civilian work force in Scotland grew by 66,000 last year. Although I am glad that unemployment is falling in the north of England, in the past year seasonally adjusted unemployment in Scotland fell faster than in the south-east of England.

Mr. Watson: Notwithstanding the Minister's self-satisfied response, does he accept that youth unemployment in Scotland, and in the city of Glasgow in particular, is at a record level? Five of the six wards which I represent in Glasgow, Central have youth unemployment in excess of 28 per cent. One has a horrendous youth unemployment figure of 45 per cent. Will the Minister say what hope he can hold out to school leavers in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's opening contribution to the proceedings of the House. I am sure that we all look forward to hearing many more contributions from him. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the youth training scheme operates extremely effectively in Glasgow. Last year, 82 per cent. of those who completed a YTS course in Glasgow obtained some form of employment over the following three months. Unemployment in the hon. Gentleman's constituency has fallen by 2,140 since January 1987.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Has my hon. Friend taken the trouble to make clear to people in Scotland the extent to which grants from the United Kingdom Treasury are made available, for instance in the development of tourism in Scotland, where, with a similar rate of unemployment —*[Interruption.]* May I wait until the interruptions have finished, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: That may be a long time.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that this may not be welcome to the Labour party, but I will repeat the question as it was interrupted.

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has a right to put his question.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Has my hon. Friend made sure that people in Scotland realise the extent to which grants are available, for instance under the Development of Tourism Act 1969, in conditions of unemployment in Scotland, where they would not be available in the rest of the United Kingdom, including the south-west?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Regional assistance is applied evenhandedly across the United Kingdom. However, as a result of need in Scotland, 65 per cent. of our working population work in assisted areas, compared with 35 per cent. for the rest of the United Kingdom. Regional assistance has helped to regenerate the Scottish economy and create the new jobs to which I referred.

Community Charge

11. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the impact of the standard community charge in self-catering tourist flats.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of such representations.

Mr. Kirkwood: Is the Minister aware that the border areas tourist authority which conducted a survey of 500 properties in the retail self-catering sector of tourism in the area, found that the owners of such properties are paying an additional £200 a year as a direct result of the standard community charge? Is it not slightly ludicrous that a unit containing 10 self-catering flats on one site is subject to the commercial rating system, whereas 10 separate units in different locations must pay 10 individual standard community charges? Will he consider changing the regulations so that all units are subject to commercial rates?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman should refer the increased costs faced by such organisations to regional and district councils in his area, because they have deliberately chosen to impose a standard charge as high as twice as much as is open to them. Had they imposed a multiplier of one instead of two, many of the problems faced by self-catering establishments would not have arisen.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Is the Minister aware that not only is the tourist industry being seriously affected by this aspect of the legislation but that it is also causing serious financial hardship to organisations that work for the disabled? Is he aware that the Association of Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, which was bequested two small properties, is paying standard community charge on them, thereby making it increasingly difficult for it to offer respite to the carers of disabled people?

Mr. Lang: Such a development would, indeed, be extremely regrettable. The standard community charge accounts for about 0·3 per cent. of total local authority revenue. The choice is open to them of imposing a multiplier of one instead of two, which would halve the burden faced by such organisations.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that this is a problem? The impact of the standard community charge on the provision of self-catering and other tourist accommodation cuts right across other Government schemes, such as farm diversification. Will he acknowledge that this problem requires a review, and will he undertake to instigate such a review?

Mr. Lang: As I have made clear on a number of occasions, we are constantly considering all aspects of the community charge legislation. Nevertheless, I urge my right hon. Friend to bring to the attention of his district and regional councils the fact that the solution lies largely in their own hands.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Minister consider the possibility that his bland refusal to offer any movement on a non-ideological point of common sense relating to the standard community charge accounts for the standing of his party in Scotland? Nobody believes the Minister when he says that the standard community charge is the responsibility of local authorities. Everyone knows that the Scottish Office calculations for the poll tax were based on the assumption that a multiplier of two would be used. Will the Minister accept the commonsense solution and allow local authorities to vary the standard community charge according to the type of properties and the level of use?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman's suggestion would take us back close to a property tax. The assumption made in the distribution of revenue support grant was in line with normal practice and carried no implications for, or recommendation on, the decisions by local authorities. Indeed, had the multiplier assumption been one instead of two, six of the nine regional authorities in Scotland would have had less revenue support grant, rather than more.

Unemployment

12. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of unemployment in Scotland in *(a)* January 1987 and *(b)* May 1989.

Mr. Lang: Seasonally adjusted unemployment in Scotland in January 1987 was 340,600; and the corresponding figure for May 1989 was over 100,000 lower at 239,800. Unemployment in Scotland now stands at its lowest level for eight years.

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for that excellent and encouraging reply. Does he agree that the Government's economic policies have helped to achieve that result? No doubt, that will cause distress to the Oppositon. Will my hon. Friend confirm that inward investment has contributed to that excellent result and that such investment would be strongly questioned by overseas companies should the Labour party ever have the chance to govern this country again?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right. We saw the Labour party's contribution to the inward investment effort when it helped drive Ford from Dundee.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The Minister will know that high unemployment, especially among our young people, forces many young people to go to the London area. Is he aware of the posters at King's Cross advertising vacancies for waitresses and hostesses in busy West End clubs and saying that payment will be made daily? Surely, as long as the Government fail to consider unemployment in Scotland, our young people will be in moral danger.

Mr. Lang: It is certainly the case that different unemployment rates in different parts of the country attract people to move in different directions. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has pointed out that Crusader Insurance recently decided to relocate from the south-east to the Inverclyde enterprise zone. That shows that market forces are working effectively within an integrated United Kingdom. The hon. Gentleman may like to know that unemployment in his constituency has fallen since January 1987 by 2,470.

Mr. Sillars: Will Scottish unemployment continue to go down over the next 12 months?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman knows that the Government never give forecasts, but, on the basis of what

has happened over the past 25 months, that is a reasonable expectation. In the hon. Gentleman's constituency, unemployment has fallen by 1,685 over that period.

Mr. Hind: My hon. Friend is to be congratulated on the attraction to Scotland of major inward investment projects, such as JVC, Digital, Compaq and Crusader Insurance. Is he aware that inward investment organisations in the north and south of England are complaining that everywhere they go in the world they are faced with Scottish Ministers and the Scottish Development Association—[HON. MEMBERS: "What is that?"]—sorry, the Scottish Development Agency? The success of the Scottish Office and the SDA has been widely commented on south of the border. Will my hon. Friend do us all a favour and not try quite so hard in the future?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his tribute to the inward investment successes of the Government and our agencies. It is true that the electronics industry in Scotland is of great value to the Scottish economy. It accounted for our single biggest export category when, in 1987, 26 per cent. of our exports, valued at £1·5 billion, were in that category. The one thing that would jeopardise our inward investment efforts would be the uncertainty created by tax-raising devolution.

Education

13. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he now has any proposals to extend section 43 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 to Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As I indicated in the House on 20 June, we shall look again at the case for action in the light of the outcome of the review of the operation of section 43 in England and Wales by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Mr. Hogg: Does that not represent an astonishing about face, given the Minister's reply in the House on 7 June, when he said that there was no evidence in support of such a move? Does that mean that he does not know his own mind, or that he is coming under increasing pressure from Conservative Members, who owe no allegiance to Scottish higher education?

Mr. Forsyth: On 7 June, I said that there had been little evidence of disruption of free speech in Scotland. I also said that we would be prepared to legislate if necessary. That remains the position.

Mr. Dewar: I suppose that this is a hopeless request, but will the Minister now give a guarantee that he will stand firm against the rather brutal performance of his right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and some of his intellectual bovver boys behind him? Will he look at the evidence and advice of his own Department, and show some respect for Scottish universities by defying the Right-wing prejudices with which he is too often personally associated? Does he recall that when he was asked specifically by the right hon. Member for Chingford whether he was arguing that there was no problem in Scottish universities or whether he was saying that section 43 would, in any case, offer no safeguards, he replied that he was quite clear that he was saying both? Why is he now flirting with a review in this weasel way?

Mr. Forsyth: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman regards the preservation of freedom of speech in our universities as a Right-wing prejudice. I appreciate that the Left in this country has been associated with the denial of freedom of speech, but this is the first time I have heard a Front-Bench spokesman suggest that concern about freedom of speech is a Right-wing prejudice. Unlike many of his hon. Friends the hon. Gentleman was actually present for that debate. He made his position clear and he will have seen that the House was well attended. Hon. Members made a number of interruptions in the debate and, as a Minister, it is my role to take account of the views of the House.

School Leavers

14. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects school leavers in *(a)* Glasgow, Maryhill and *(b)* areas of similarly high unemployment to be able reasonably to anticipate finding a permanent, full-time job.

Mr. Lang: With the considerable fall in unemployment over the past two years, the buoyancy of Scottish industry and the projected decline in the number of young people, the employment prospects for school leavers are better than they have been for some time.

Mrs. Fyfe: Does the Minister realise that he will stand accused of amazing complacency by the people of Scotland when they consider his replies to questions on unemployment this afternoon? Has he noticed that of the 20 constituencies in Great Britain with the highest level of unemployment, no less than eight are in Glasgow? Will he tell us what the Government's present economic policies are doing for the people of Glasgow, including the school leavers who cannot get a job?

Mr. Lang: Glasgow undoubtedly continues to have very considerable unemployment problems, to which the Government are addressing great attention. Nevertheless, since January 1987, unemployment in Glasgow has fallen by 21,500, or by about 30 per cent. I would feel more guilty of complacency if it were not for the fact that Glasgow and Strathclyde have rejected the technology academy offered to them, which would considerably have advanced the prospects of young people in the area.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: If Scotland ever had the misfortune either to have an assembly or to be separated from the United Kingdom, does my hon. Friend take the view that we would have more employed and more inward investment, or less? Indeed, would we have more mistresses, or whatever was suggested earlier?

Mr. Lang: I am sure that my hon. and learned Friend makes a useful point. Over the past six years, the Scottish Development Agency has invested no less than £166 million in Glasgow and that is helping to generate new enterprise in the area.

Mr. Worthington: Will the Minister comment on that successful Scottish firm, Hinari, which is based in Cumbernauld, which chose its name because it sounded Japanese? The founder has said:

"Although our products are designed in Scotland most are made in the Far East, half coming from Japan. We wanted to let people know that our products are made in Japan".

What comment is that on the economic miracle?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will have to develop his points on another occasion. He has given us a tantalising glimpse of the point that he was trying to make. I am prepared to compliment Hinari, which is a good and effective company, as are many other companies in Scotland. The number of companies registered in Scotland has increased by over half in the 1980s. There has been an increase of 20,000 and an extra 66,000 people have entered self-employment in recent years. Those are signs of the growth of enterprise and of the spread of new companies in Scotland over that time.

Unemployment

15. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last discussed unemployment levels with the Confederation of British Industry in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have frequent contacts with the Confederation of British Industry in Scotland. Its most recent assessment, conveyed to me in a letter from the chairman of the Scottish Council, is of confidence in the continuing buoyancy of the Scottish economy.

Sir Hector Monro: I warmly welcome the fall of 100,000 in the number of people unemployed in the past two years and the fall from 13·6 to 9·6 per cent. What discussions has my right hon. and learned Friend had about Enterprise Scotland and about how the CBI and himself consider that there may be a further fall in the numbers of people unemployed?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, there is a great degree of interest in the proposal that was published in the Government's recent White Paper which proposed private sector-led local agencies. At the moment we are considering our response to the many constructive comments that have been made. I hope to report to the House in the near future because I have no doubt that the proposals will be relevant in dealing with the need to reduce unemployment further over the months and years to come.

Mr. McAllion: Will the Secretary of State explain why the Scottish Office has allowed the employment services division independently to launch a two-year pilot scheme called the "job interview guarantee scheme" in the Whitfield area of Dundee and in the Castlemilk area of Glasgow without consulting or even informing local Members of Parliament, local councils, local people and the local partnership groups which exist in those areas under the New Urban Life for Scotland policy? When will the Government stop doing things to the long-term unemployed and start doing things for and with the long-term unemployed?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman might be under a misapprehension. This matter is under consideration, but no decision has been reached.

Mr. Ingram: Given the importance of the new towns to the economic health of the Scottish economy, when the Secretary of State met the CBI, did he explain the reason for the inordinate and unacceptable delay in the publication of the White Paper on the future of the new towns?

Mr. Rifkind: There is no delay in that matter. If the hon. Gentleman is interested in the well-being of the new towns, he must be of the view that we should bring our proposals forward only when we are in a position to do so. These are important matters. The winding up of the various new town corporations is a long-term reform of great significance to all those who live in the new towns. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman wishes us to rush such matters before we have reached appropriate conclusions.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: My right hon. and learned Friend and his Scottish Office colleagues have been rightly proud this afternoon when stating how much help they have managed to give to Scotland. In an earlier supplementary question, the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) said that expenditure on health in Scotland was 25 per cent. more per head of population than it is in England. If that is so in relation to industry and employment also, would my right hon. and learned Friend be surprised if I and many of my colleagues who represent English constituencies felt that we were being discriminated against?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not think that it is true in the spheres of industry and employment. However, it is certainly the case that throughout the United Kingdom the Government spend more on those areas which have higher levels of unemployment. That is what regional policy is about, whether it is regional policy implemented in England, Scotland or Wales.

Mr. McLeish: Does the Secretary of State accept that nearly 240,000 Scots were unemployed in May 1989 and that that figure is still 70 per cent. higher than the figure of 140,000 for May 1979? Clearly, there has not been a stunning 10-year success story in reducing unemployment. Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that the regime of high interest rates and cuts in regional aid is having a crippling effect on small and medium-sized businesses in Scotland? Treasury figures suggest that Scottish companies are facing a bill of £250 million in increased borrowing costs. Finally, why does the Secretary of State have to go to Wales to attack Thatcherism? Why does he not stand up in the Cabinet and urge lower interest rates, lower inflation and a sensible regional aid package?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that his views are not shared by Scottish industry. That is not surprising because manufacturing output in Scotland grew by more than 7 per cent. in 1988—the fastest rate of growth since 1973. The hon. Gentleman might also like to reflect on articles by the Fraser of Allander Institute which point to the fact that the Labour party's proposals for constitutional change would cause considerable damage to the Scottish economy.

NHS Reform

16. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what interest has been demonstrated by general practitioners in Tayside about the proposals in the White Paper covering general practitioner involvement in self-governing hospitals and for budgetary control of general practitioners' practices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Interest has been expressed in developing a self-governing hospital and in GP practice

budgets. I welcome this wish to explore the opportunities offered by the White Paper and I have asked officials to pursue this with those concerned.

Mr. Walker: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that since the interest was shown in Forfar, further interest has been shown in Blairgowrie and elsewhere in my constituency? Is he also aware that a number of local GPs are interested in setting up their own contracts and they have been in touch with me—*[Interruption.]* This is important and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can hear me—about the Government imposing the renegotiated contract of service for GPs because they believe that that is in the best interests of patients? That point has been made by several GPs in my area.

Mr. Forsyth: I am delighted that my hon. Friend is so active in securing the best interests of his constituents in terms of primary care services. I am also delighted by the response that he referred to from GPs in his constituency. With regard to the GPs' contract, it is a matter of great regret that the conference did not support the position of the national negotiators on behalf of the GPs and the contract, which would have produced a fair deal for GPs and would have ensured that those GPs who provided preventive services were properly rewarded.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Why is the Minister in favour of self-government for hospitals, but not in favour of self-government for Scotland?

Mr. Forsyth: On the connection between devolution and the interests of the Health Service, the hon. and learned Gentleman and his party would do well to explain how the additional 25 per cent. which is spent on health care would be funded on the basis of his proposals which would ultimately lead to the break-up of the United Kingdom. The hon. and learned Gentleman should appreciate that self-governing hospitals will remain part of the National Health Service while a Scottish assembly would prevent Scotland from remaining part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Galbraith: When does the Minister expect to be able to name the first hospital in Scotland to opt out of its health board? Does he agree that that hospital will be acting against the wishes of its staff? Will the Minister take this opportunity to condemn the intimidation of hospital staff in Scotland by the managers who are hoping to get one hospital to opt out? Does he agree that the intimidation and the delay in announcing the name of the hospital reflects the fact that the proposals for hospitals to opt out have absolutely no support anywhere in Scotland?

Mr. Forsyth: It is wholly irresponsible for an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman to talk about the intimidation of staff by management in the Health Service particularly when we have not asked health boards in Scotland to give an indication of hospitals that are interested in self-governing status. Lest I disappoint the hon. Gentleman, I can assure him that very shortly we will be issuing our proposals on self-governing hospitals and inviting general managers to put forward cases. The process of ensuring effective delivery of health care in Scotland is not helped by the kind of language from the hon. Gentleman that we have grown used to.

Adam Smith Institute

17. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent communications he has had with Mr. Douglas Mason and the Adam Smith Institute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have had a number of contacts with Mr. Mason and with the Adam Smith Institute. I have always found them stimulating and I hope that they will continue.

Mr. Galloway: In any of those contacts was the Secretary of State spared Mr. Douglas Mason's bizarre and unbelievable idea that Hong Kong should be towed, lock, stock and barrel and relocated off the west coast of Scotland, on one of the western isles? As I listened to the radio interview, I thought that the man must be barking mad, until I realised that it was the same Douglas Mason who was the architect of the poll tax. Will the Secretary of State see whether there is a rocky outcrop somewhere on the edge of our territorial waters where Mr. Douglas Mason, the Adam Smith Institute and the trash Thatcherite ideas, which have no support in Scotland, might be relocated?

Mr. Rifkind: I said that I always found Mr. Mason's views stimulating. I did not say that I always agreed with them.

Nurses (Regrading)

19. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the regrading of night nursing staff.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have received a number of representations from hon. Members and from members of the nursing profession. The new grading structure was agreed with the professional bodies and trade unions representing nurses, and it means that nurses are now rewarded for what they actually do. Nurses' pay has reached its highest ever level in real terms and nurses in clinical practice have better career prospects than ever before.

Mr. Bruce: Does the Minister recognise that, nevertheless, there is great resentment and a great loss of morale among nursing staff, particularly among those who are designated night duty, and that the grading appeals system does not deal with that? Does he accept that the management and unions agreed the new grading structure without consulting nurses and that they should now be consulted with a view to changing the grading to ensure that morale is restored?

Mr. Forsyth: If doctors' and nurses' representatives, speaking on behalf of their professions, are to be criticised according to the agreements that they reach, it will make the Government's position extremely difficult. Night staff are treated on exactly the same basis as day staff. All clinical nursing posts are graded according to job content. The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. All clinical nursing posts are graded according to job content and the level of responsibility carried. Night staff must meet the same criteria as day staff to qualify for the higher grades available, and there is nothing unfair in that.

In addition, night staff also qualify for special duty payments, which add 30 per cent. to the hourly rate for hours worked between 8 pm and 6 am, and 60 per cent. for hours worked on Sundays or on public holidays. All of that is on a basis agreed by the staff representatives and the employers.

Hong Kong

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement about Hong Kong, which I visited from 2 to 4 July.

I held extensive discussions with members of the Executive and Legislative Councils, with professional people, entrepreneurs, students and others.

There can be no doubt that the appalling events in Peking have badly shaken confidence in Hong Kong. It is of the first importance that the Chinese Government take early, tangible and sustained action to begin restoring confidence in China's intentions towards Hong Kong. We shall be pressing them strongly on this.

There has been understandable pressure on this country to grant a right of abode to all British passport holders in Hong Kong. I had to explain that this House would not support an indefinite and open-ended commitment of that kind. It would test our capacity in all kinds of areas—housing, employment, transport, inner-city services—on an unprecedented scale. The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs reached a similar conclusion. I was, however, able to assure the people of Hong Kong that we can and will take action in a number of matters.

First, on the question of nationality, we want to enhance people's confidence to remain. We are working urgently on a scheme which will make some provision for people in both the private and public sectors on the basis not simply of connections with Britain but the value of service to Hong Kong.

Secondly, at the European Council in Madrid we alerted our Community partners to Hong Kong's problems. I am also in direct touch with the other countries which will attend next week's economic summit in Paris. We shall continue there and elsewhere to mobilise the support of the international community.

Thirdly, I was able to confirm as common ground that the Joint Declaration, with its prospect of the greatest possible autonomy, remains the best foundation for Hong Kong's future. We have identified a number of ways in which Hong Kong's traditions of freedom can be further protected. In particular, there is scope for reviewing the rate of progress towards representative government. In this, the wishes of the people of Hong Kong will continue to be fundamental to our approach.

We favour a Bill of Rights entrenching essential freedoms. The Hong Kong Government are announcing today that they will introduce such a Bill as soon as possible. It will form part of the existing law and be able to continue after the transfer of sovereignty.

We shall take up with the Chinese Government two matters of special concern—article 18 of the draft Basic Law, which could enable the central Government in Peking to declare a state of emergency in Hong Kong after 1997 and, even more important, the question of the stationing in Hong Kong of Chinese military forces.

Events in China have overshadowed Hong Kong's most immediate practical problem—how to cope with the 48,000 boat people who have found shelter there. I visited two of the camps housing boat people and saw the screening of new arrivals now being conducted under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The Hong Kong Government and people have dealt magnificently with an appalling problem, but Hong Kong is being overwhelmed by the sheer weight of numbers. The vast majority of those reaching Hong Kong are not political refugees. They have no hope of being accepted for resettlement anywhere else in the world. Hong Kong cannot offer them a home or a livelihood.

At the recent conference in Geneva, resettlement pledges are made for all those who qualify as refugees. The report of the Select Committee recognised that it is intolerable for those who do not qualify as refugees to have to spend years in camps. Their only future lies back home. I have discussed this problem with the Vietnamese Foreign Minister both in Geneva and in London. Official talks are continuing. I am hopeful that we will be able to find a solution which enables boat people to return to Vietnam in safety and dignity.

Hong Kong's predicament reflects the facts of its history and geography. Those are inescapable, but, in approving the joint declaration, the House undertook to make the best possible provision for Hong Kong after 1997. We shall pursue the measures I have outlined with vigour as part of that wider and unchanged commitment.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): We welcome back the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary—Typhoon Geoffrey—after his eventful visit to Hong Kong. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kaufman: We trust that some of his experiences there will cause him to value all the more the balanced, restrained and positive approach to all subjects by Her Majesty's Opposition in the House. On the other hand, he will equally have learnt that the people of Hong Kong are capable of accustoming themselves speedily to democratic political activity. I am sorry that the right hon. and learned Gentleman said so little on that crucial issue. We trust that the Government will lose no time in making clear their acceptance of the Select Committee recommendation that 50 per cent. of the Legislative Council should be elected in 1991, with full democracy in 1995. We also support the Select Committee's advocacy of an elected Chief Executive, although we believe that he or she should be directly elected from the start.

I am glad to hear of the speedy introduction in Hong Kong of a Bill of Rights. People in Hong Kong asked for that when I was there, and no doubt they made the same demand of the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

We hope that discussions on the Basic Law will resume quickly. While concerned that there should be no attempt on either side to unravel the Joint Declaration, which, if it is abided by, represents the best prospects for Hong Kong's future, it would be valuable if assurances could be obtained of firm Chinese adherence to the declaration and, if at all possible, of agreements by China to keep the People's Liberation Army out of Hong Kong.

The Opposition believe that it would not be right to offer any commitment to Hong Kong British dependent territory passport holders on the right of entry into the United Kingdom or the right of abode here. Others with an existing right of entry to the United Kingdom, which the Government refuse to honour—such as the dependants mentioned yesterday by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond)—have a much more specific and immediate claim. If there

[Mr. Kaufman]

are Crown servants in Hong Kong, at whatever level, who might feel or find themselves at risk as transfer to China approaches, of course it would be right for the Home Secretary to consider using his discretion under the Immigration Act 1971 in their favour on an individual basis. I am sure that this Home Secretary or his Labour successor would do so.

In the light of the scheme that the right hon. and learned Gentleman says he is considering, I state clearly that the Opposition are against the creation of special favoured categories based on status or affluence. I agree with yesterday's statement by Dame Lydia Dunn that the creation of such categories would be divisive and difficult to defend. I must tell the right hon. and learned Gentleman that if such categories are created a Labour Government would not necessarily be bound by them.

We believe that international action should be invoked to reassure Hong Kong citizens. I welcomed the right hon. and learned Gentleman's assurance that this issue will be raised at the forthcoming Paris economic summit. I believe that it should be discussed in detail at the Commonwealth conference at Kuala Lumpur in the autumn and at the European Community Paris summit in December.

We believe that the United States has a special responsibility towards the Vietnamese boat people, whose plight stems directly from the consequences of the Vietnam war. The right hon. and learned Gentleman, like myself, had the unforgettable experience of visiting the boat people in their detention centres. I hope that any solution to this difficult problem will be based only on arrangements that recognise and uphold the human rights of those unhappy migrants, whether refugees or not.

While it would be wrong to take the view that China must be permanently excluded from the international community, I must make it clear that we believe that it would be absolutely wrong, after an indecent interval, somehow to pretend that the Peking massacres never happened. It would be a betrayal of the murdered thousands and the people of Hong Kong were we to return to business as usual with the guilty men of the forbidden city.

Will the Foreign Secretary assure the House that there will be no Government support for the British-China Expo '89 due to be held in Peking in November or the major trade missions planning to go to China later this year, one of which boasts that it will be meeting Li Peng. We are told that the Department of Trade and Industry will be offering support to the participants in the trade missions and that official facilities will be drawn upon to the full. I hope that that offer will be withdrawn, as it would be unacceptable in the light of what has taken place in Peking.

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman assure the House that there is no question of anything but rejection of Peking's reported order from Britain of 170 military vehicles?

We urge the Government to stand up for the basic rights of the people of Hong Kong and to stand up against the reversion to barbarism in China, exemplified by the massacres and executions. As long as they do so, they shall have the support of the Opposition.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) for focusing, although not sequentially, on the extremely important and difficult aspects to which we must address ourselves.

Nobody could condemn more strongly than myself, except perhaps the people of Hong Kong, the events that took place in Peking just over a month ago. Yet it is the people of Hong Kong who are most concerned to secure from this House the right balance of response to those intolerable events in the light of the significant responsibility of China for their future. That is why I noticed with sympathy the right hon. Gentleman's point about the importance of continuing now to build upon the Joint Declaration, to recognise that there should be no attempt to unravel that and to proceed further to examine particular aspects of Basic Law. Those propositions that he urged upon me necessarily involve engagement with the people now in charge in China.

The people of Hong Kong are also concerned to secure the least possible damage to their economic vitality as a result of what has happened in China, because China is their largest trading partner and vice versa. Although I take seriously—as does the House, I am sure—the right hon. Gentleman's point about the way in which we deal with the present Administration in China, we must also not neglect the need to promote in every way we can the interests of the people of Hong Kong.

I noticed with interest what the right hon. Gentleman said about the future of democratic arrangements in Hong Kong. The people to whom I spoke there are, of course, conscious of the recommendations of the Select Committee in that respect. Frankly, they have not yet had time to address themselves to the implications for their own 24 May recommendations, which fell short of those put forward by the Select Committee. They emphasised that they would need further time to consider that, and that is why I emphasised that we must pay attention to their conclusions.

The Select Committee said:

"we also believe even more strongly that Hong Kong people must be allowed to decide on their own system of government before 1997 as well as after 1997."

Therefore, that must be the guide.

I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his welcome for the announcement being made in Hong Kong today, and confirmed in this House, about the intention to implement a Bill of Rights as soon as possible. I am also grateful to him for the reminder, although I need no reminding, of the need for the Home Secretary to pay special attention and exercise discretion to Crown servants and others whose occupations may put them at risk or in jeopardy.

The right hon. Gentleman made two further observations which, I confess, I find it a little difficult to reconcile. He confirmed that there should be no automatic conferment of a right of abode to BDTC passport holders, which is a point supported by the Select Committee. At the same time, he was apprehensive about the consequences of having specially favoured categories. If by that he means a set of narrow categorised propositions, I understand his point. However, the Select Committee, and many of those to whom I spoke in Hong Kong, would like attention to be paid—even if not to the extent urged by them—to the role that can be played by assuring people in the public and private sectors, and more widely, to encourage them to

maintain their position in the Hong Kong economy. That is a matter to which many people attach a great deal of importance.

I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for reminding the House of the extent to which the United States should accept its fair share of responsibility for the Vietnamese boat people. The United States representative at the Geneva conference, Mr. Eagleburger, said:

"Those who flee clandestinely and cannot establish a well founded fear of persecution must understand that such flight no longer leads to resettlement. Such persons will face an indefinite stay in a holding camp."

He continued:

"It is important for those thinking of fleeing the former North Vietnam to realise that most will fail to qualify as refugees and will therefore not be eligible for resettlement."

But he stopped there, and, in our judgment, that is the wrong place at which to stop. If they are to be categorised in the way in which the United States and others have done, as not entitled to treatment as refugees, it must be right to try as we are doing, to secure a method for them to return to a secure future in their homeland.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): It is obvious, and has been for a long time, that it would be completely impractical for Britain to provide a right of abode for 3·25 million or many more Hong Kong people—a point which my right hon. and learned Friend has been making with great patience and courage in Hong Kong these past few days. Therefore, does he not share with me some regret that an orchestrated and expensive new campaign is yet again being mounted in Hong Kong and London to hammer home this single unattainable point?

Does not that distract the people of Hong Kong from concentrating on the many more positive possibilities which are now opening up for the future prosperity of Hong Kong, including persuading the international community to underwrite assurances for the future security of Hong Kong and providing passports for certain hard working key personnel to stay in Hong Kong. Contrary to the views of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), those people are not the elité or the rich, but those who are most dedicated and vital to maintain the administration of the territory in the coming years.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his observations and for the work of the Select Committee, over which he presided. He was quite right to draw attention, as he did in the Committee's report, to these two distinct factors: first, the importance of seeking the widest possible international assurances against an eventuality which we all hope will never happen; and secondly, as the Committee said, an immediate need to provide assurances to those people whose presence in Hong Kong, by reason of their skills and qualifications in both the public and private sectors, is vital to its continued prosperity. I hope that those who may be contemplating a sadly distracting campaign, of the kind to which my right hon. Friend referred, will think again about the wisdom of doing so.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): May I first welcome the Foreign Secretary's commitment to a Bill of Rights, and secondly, may I welcome the fact of his visit to Hong Kong? It clearly would have been much worse if he had not gone, but how much better it would have been if he had not gone with an empty hand and a closed mind. Surely his total failure to reassure anyone in Hong Kong, from the most senior expatriate downwards, cannot but have the effect of undermining the credibility of our administration in Hong Kong, of accelerating the flight of capital and brains from the colony and of placing in jeopardy our long-term strategic interests in the entire area.

I ask the Government now if they will study the interesting report by Professor Bernard Corry, which outlines the economic benefits to Britain of honouring the right of abode, and I ask them for a response to it. Surely that is a much more rational way of approaching the delicate question of nationality than the sort of scaremongering that we have heard from the Government and from the Labour party.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman is not very perceptive in his observations: he denounced my visit for having been undertaken with an empty hand, having immediately preceded that by congratulating me on the firm commitment to the Bill of Rights, which was one of several things on which I was able to give some assurance to the people of Hong Kong. I have dealt with the others in my statement.

If the right hon. Gentleman studies the Corry report, he will find that it deals separately with the economic aspect and that, in a very qualified judgment, it states:

"The feasibility of such a large migration therefore seems to be shown from an economic point of view".

It goes on to deal with what it calls management and logistical issues and clearly says that many of the problems that arise are exactly the same as those that I identified in my statement. The right hon. Gentleman would be wrong to conclude that the report offers any sort of support for his proposition, which is, on the whole, rejected on both sides of the House.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Although the whole House understands the anxieties of the people of Hong Kong, may I add my voice to that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) and say that it is perfectly clear to almost every Member of the House that Parliament would never pass the legislation necessary to give the right of abode to more than 3 million citizens of Hong Kong? I am sure that I speak for many friends of Hong Kong in the House when I ask whether it is not time, therefore, for the leaders of Hong Kong to study the alternative thoughts of my right hon. and learned Friend about an international operation to deal with the issue of abode, about how to push forward the Joint Declaration and obtain a good Basic Law, and about how to formulate a Bill of Rights—which, I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend, is an important proposal?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's support in that respect. I think that he should not respond too unsympathetically to the position of the leaders of the people of Hong Kong. He will understand as well as anyone the impact of the shock of the past month on the attitude of those in the territory. He will also join me in acknowledging that they have already shown themselves capable of responding in many respects to the need for leadership which their people are expressing. I hope that they will respond—I have some confidence that they may—to the kind of advice that my right hon. Friend has given them. It is important that they should

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

understand that the advice on these issues coming from this House is fully appreciative of the immense difficulty of their present position in Hong Kong.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Whatever the validity of the treaty made long ago with a very different regime about the territory of Hong Kong, does the Foreign Secretary agree that we must at all costs uphold the right of self-determination of the people who now live there? Should not that right be emphasised in any negotiations with the Chinese Government?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right of self-determination, in the sense in which it can sometimes be expressed, cannot be applied in anything like the traditional sense to the territory and people of Hong Kong, because of the extent to which their position depends on a lease that runs out in 1997; but that does not undermine the importance of paying the utmost respect, as far as it is possible to do so, to the wishes of the people of Hong Kong. That is why we consulted them so closely in the evolution of the Joint Declaration, why we tried to secure their support for it, and why I now attach the greatest importance to the fact that, in this House and in Hong Kong, the Joint Declaration that we achieved is regarded by people on all sides as the best common ground on which to build for the future.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): Is not one of the most important things that the Select Committee report reveals about the right of abode the fact that flexibility about those who could qualify to be British dependent territory citizens would mean that more than 5 million would qualify? That figure puts the problem into perspective. Given that background, does my right hon. and learned Friend also agree that now is not the time to run a campaign through advertising, but a time for quiet reflection? Would not an early debate on the Select Committee's report send out a clear signal from the House that would be valuable for Hong Kong and the world?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I welcome my hon. Friend's first point. His second point is also important. It has been heard by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and will no doubt be taken into account in his preparation of future business.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): There are no easy answers to the anxieties and problems of the people of Hong Kong, but one important element, as the Foreign Secretary has already recognised, is the status of representative government in Hong Kong before the 1997 deadline. With that in mind, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman make it plain that the ascertained wishes of the people of Hong Kong will be what determine the timetable of the advance towards full democracy, rather than apprehensions about the reactions of the Chinese Government?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his support generally for our approach to this matter. I take note of the important point that he makes. In my answers, I have tried to say that the actual shape of the representative institutions that are appropriate to emerge between now and 1997 is not a question on which opinion in Hong Kong has yet focused with as much care and precision as people there would like. They would want to take account not only of the generally recognised need for faster progress, but of the need to secure stability into the future. Once they have formulated their views in that respect, Her Majesty's Government will be paying direct attention to what they have to say. It is already clear from what I have learnt this week that the arrangements to come into place in 1991 will need review in any event. That is quite apart from what may be necessary for the longer-term shape of the institutions.

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): Is not the best guarantee for Hong Kong people not to clamour to get out of Hong Kong, but rather to stay in Hong Kong, to develop and entrench their democracy, and to make Hong Kong the success that it undoubtedly can be? That success is the best guarantee, and the only long-term guarantee, of Hong Kong's future.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Yes, I entirely agree with my hon. Friend in that respect. I underline the extent to which the future pattern in respect of the matters about which he is talking depends crucially on the need for the Chinese Government to recognise the great damage that has been done to confidence in Hong Kong by the dreadful events of a month ago, and for them to take early and sustained action to begin to repair that damage.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): While the Foreign Secretary is right to concentrate on the central importance of improved relations with China, the events in Tiananmen square will remain indelible. At the economic summit, will he attempt to get the other six nations to help China to remain on course for economic reform, but also tie it in to changes in the Basic Law and make it see the interrelationship of economic reform in China with a peaceful and sensible transition in 1997 in Hong Kong?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I accept the point put by the right hon. Gentleman, and have already been in direct communication with the Governments who will be represented at the economic summit next week. I have drawn their attention to the central economic point that the right hon. Gentleman makes. We need to leave those in China in no doubt of our abhorrence of what took place a month ago, but nevertheless we must refrain from action that can sever all links between it and the prospects of economic reform. That is a difficult road to strike, but it is the position precisely endorsed, as the right hon. Gentleman may have forgotten, by the Madrid summit only a week ago. This is the prudent position. It is also important to secure the widest possible support for the measures advocated on both sides of the House on the Basic Law.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Does the Foreign Secretary agree that the solution to the problem of the Vietnamese boat people will be found when the Vietnamese realise that they have a stake in their country and wish to live in it? If the right hon. and learned Gentleman will use his good offices to ensure that the necessary international agreements are obtained, Vietnam can be incorporated and reintegrated into the world community as a developing nation, and one that desperately needs substantial development aid—much of it from this country. If the Foreign Secreary agrees, what timetable can he suggest for those events?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that it is generally recognised that, if Vietnam is to join the ranks of those nations that might expect development aid, it will be necessary for her not only to begin taking effective action to receive her own people back into their country, but to secure the withdrawal of her army of occupation from Cambodia.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): Give it back to Pol Pot.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The whole House knows that the world will insist that, if Vietnamese troops withdraw from Cambodia, it must be on condition that Pol Pot and his cronies do not return to play any part there.

Another feature of the statements of Vietnamese Government spokesmen that is becoming increasingly clear is their recognition that the worst blight that they must remove from their own economy is the blight of Socialism, which produced the current disaster.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his courageous visit to Hong Kong, and on the emphasis that he has placed on the fact that the best hope for the future of the people of Hong Kong resides in a stable and prosperous Hong Kong? Will he take action to implement the recommendations of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs' report on the establishment of a constitutional court to sit in Hong Kong, interpreting in accordance with the traditional principles of British law rather than the political principles of the People's National Congress? If there is no confidence in the stability of the legal system, the future confidence of Hong Kong itself will not endure for long.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for his support. I have noticed, as have others, the Select Committee's recommendation of a re-examination of article 157 of the Basic Law and the specific proposal for a joint constitutional court. It is too early to reach a conclusion on that. It would, I think, be unrealistic to expect the sovereign authority of the People's Republic to divorce itself entirely from the constitutional process at the last resort, but the further the matter can be taken along the lines advocated by my hon. and learned Friend the better.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that if all of us here were Chinese in Hong Kong, none of us would be as sanguine about our future as various hon. Members have been this afternoon? Is he aware that the reason why people are anxious to maintain the pressure for the right of abode is that everyone in his right mind knows full well that, in the period after 1997 when China resumes full sovereignty over Hong Kong, any agreements that he secures will not be worth the paper that they are written on if China decides to apply its sovereignty in the murderous fashion that we saw in Peking last month?

Let me ask the Foreign Secretary a final question: if the people in Hong Kong were white, would he take the same view that he has taken today?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am dismayed that the hon. Gentleman should descend so far as to make that last point, which is entirely unworthy of him and of the argument.

The assessment made by members of the Select Committee, and by many other Members of the House, rested on the sheer scale of the problem. The numbers involved could be well beyond 3·25 million—perhaps 4 or 5 million. The hon. Gentleman's other point has been manifest to most of us for very much longer than it seems to have been to him. The future of Hong Kong cannot be separated from that of China—the world's largest Communist country, on the very corner of which the people of Hong Kong have established a magnificent society. It is for that reason that we have all been working as hard as we have been—not with any undue optimism or sanguinity, but to achieve the best possible result for Hong Kong, as the House would wish.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that one of the results of his visit has been to reassure the people of Hong Kong that Britain has not turned its back on their future? His visit will have reassured them that their future lies at the very forefront of his thinking and the thinking of all hon. Members. Does my right hon. and learned Friend also accept that what is most urgently needed in Hong Kong is restoration of confidence in the future? As he said, the future lies in Hong Kong's relationship with China. When, therefore, does my right hon. and learned Friend think that it might be prudent to begin again the urgent discussions that are necessary if Britain, China and the international community are to provide a basis for the re-growth and rebirth of confidence in Hong Kong's future?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his first observation. Although I recognised that a lot of the message that I had to take to Hong Kong was bound to be seen as unwelcome, I was grateful for the fact that some of the most outspoken critics of views expressed in this House were the most outspoken in their thanks to me for having gone to Hong Kong. I am sure that it was right to take the opportunity to carry this dialogue forward. I certainly derived benefit from what they had to tell me.

As for my hon. Friend's second point, he is absolutely right that we need to promote the re-creation of confidence, but the Government of China have a leading part to play in that. I am not yet able to say when we can begin contacts of the various kinds that will be necessary —whether in the Joint Liaison Group, or in the Basic Law drafting committee, or more directly than that. It is important to achieve headway in that direction in a way that is compatible with all the other considerations that the House has in mind.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that friends of the Chinese people are appalled and saddened by the recent tragedy? However, there is no point, as some people have suggested, in Britain helping the people of Hong Kong in the distant future, if a disaster occurs. A disaster has already occurred. When the Chinese shot unarmed students in Peking, they shot the confidence of the people of Hong Kong. What is required now is the restoration of hope and confidence—hope by maintaining a dialogue with China and confidence not simply by alerting foreign countries, as the Foreign Secretary said, but by seeking immediate international guarantees of sanctuary for the people of Hong Kong, with Britain playing a leading role.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his advice. I know that he has played a leading part in establishing bilateral organisations between ourselves and the people of China, not least those connected with disability. He understands very well the basis of respect between the two peoples, which should form the basis of our relations. He is quite right to say that what happened in Tiananmen square did grave damage to many of those relationships. He is also right to urge the necessity for dialogue of the right kind with the people and the Government of China, along the lines that he suggests.

As for confidence, there, too, we shall certainly seek to do all that we can to promote confidence by dealing with the other nations that are of most importance, although it will be exceedingly difficult to translate that into precise numbers and timed guarantees.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): Does my right hon. and learned Friend realise that the prospect of mandatory repatriation for the Vietnamese boat people is a very serious step? For many of them, particularly those in Da Nang province, his statement that their interests would best be served by staying at home means a return to abject poverty caused by war, the policies of their own Government and also natural disasters such as typhoons and other serious catastrophes which make their lives intolerable? If we are considering mandatory repatriation, is it not time to follow the advice of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs in its 1986 report, which was to start to plan internationally how best to restore Vietnam to the family of south-east Asian nations and therefore give the people who are being forced back to Vietnam some prospect of a better standard of living than the one they have left?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I well understand my hon. Friend's long-term interest in the future of the people and country of Vietnam. I sympathise with the force of his point. It is encouraging to have the reluctant acceptance of the Select Committee that the logical consequence of a screening programme is the repatriation of those who have been screened out. It is important for us to couple that with every encouragement that we can give towards economic reform in Vietnam. As I have said already, it has to be coupled with the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia under terms well understood by the international community, and with a willingness to accept the people who are on their way back to their native land. Against that background, it is right to encourage Britain and the international community to look in the direction of the commencement of development aid.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Now that we have clearly established that the moral responsibility of the Government, Parliament and the people of Britain to the people of Hong Kong extends no further than doing what will cause us least discomfort, should we not drop the pretence that there is anything honourable about our stance? Should not the Foreign Secretary feel a little abashed about having to dress up his statement with proposals about extending democracy in Hong Kong and a Bill of Rights? He must recall, as I do, the many debates in the House over decades, when various propositions by Back-Bench Members were rejected out of hand, mainly on the basis that to extend democracy to Hong Kong would offend the Government of the Chinese People's Republic? Surely the Foreign Secretary is not suggesting for a moment that those proposals will help the people of Hong Kong in their present distress.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman seems at odds with most other right hon. and hon. Members, as everyone has welcomed the measures that we have supported in my statement earlier today. He will recollect that the history of Hong Kong has always been a matter of special interest and has been so treated from both Front Benches.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to have regard for the following business today, which is an Opposition day, and for the fact that we may be returning to this matter later. I shall take two more questions from each side.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Was my right hon. and learned Friend aware of any moves now in Hong Kong towards the realisation that the greatest test of leadership for those who represent the people of Hong Kong is facing up to the need to build up Hong Kong as a successful and stable province economically and socially, so that beyond 1997 they have the best chance of preserving two systems in one country? Was he able to reassure them that the Government will do all they can to help that process towards democracy—for example, by issuing a Green Paper on electoral law as the Select Committee proposed? Finally, will he reinforce his clear statement that he will do all he can with the Government in China to stress that military forces should not be based in Hong Kong beyond 1997, particularly on HMS Tamar?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I certainly shall not neglect the importance of my hon. Friend's last point. In regard to a Green Paper on electoral reform, he will understand that all those matters are essentially for consideration and management by the Government of Hong Kong. I know from my discussions with them this week that they will be addressing themselves to that part of the agenda shortly, having felt it necessary to address other matters in the immediate aftermath of the shocking events of a month ago. I can certainly assure him that those in the leadership of the people and territory of Hong Kong are immensely aware of the importance of building up confidence in the territory in the years between now and 1997, and beyond. One of the most heartening features of the immense complexities and difficulties of this case is the quality, dedication, energy and skill of those who are currently leading the people of Hong Kong.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): While one understands the perfectly justified feelings of concern in Hong Kong, feelings that we would share if we were living in Hong Kong, is it not in the overall economic interests of China that the agreement signed between Britain and China should be firmly adhered to from 1997? Despite the horrors of what has occurred in China recently, is it not likely that China has every intention of honouring that agreement?

But does not the Secretary of State agree that, first and foremost, China should show that it understands our revulsion at what occurred by ending its present policy of repression and terror? How confident is the Secretary of State that the Chinese leadership will agree that Chinese troops should not be stationed in Hong Kong after 1997?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I address myself to the general point made by the hon. Gentleman, because I cannot make any predictions about the response of the Chinese Government on that or any other point at this stage. It is clear, as a matter of logic and common sense, that it is massively in the interests of China for the Joint Declaration to be upheld and for Hong Kong's stability and prosperity to be maintained. That is the basis on which the declaration was entered into, and the basis on which we have commended its credibility, not only in Hong Kong but around the world. The actions taken by the Chinese Government a month ago plainly were not in the interests of China, its Government, its people or anyone else. Those actions, which plainly flew so much in the face of justice and common sense, did much to damage present confidence. I certainly accept the hon. Gentleman's advice about the need to press China as strongly as we can to return to a true recognition of its interests in upholding the agreement.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Would my right hon. and learned Friend accept that a number of hon. Members were deeply concerned when we transferred the sovereignty of Hong Kong in 1984, and therefore affected the future of its people, without any meaningful discussions with them? Will he take seriously the recommendations of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, which were reinforced by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), who said that the one way of re-establishing confidence in Hong Kong and guaranteeing its future is to implement a meaningful system of democracy, involving the franchise for all the people of Hong Kong, before the transfer of sovereignty in 1997?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On the first point, my hon. Friend may not have observed the immense attention that we paid at the time, in consultation after consultation with the people and the leaders of Hong Kong as well as hon. Members——

Mr. Winterton: The leaders, not the people.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: And the people, so far as it was possible to do so, and the House. The Joint Declaration was the result of consultation to such an extent that it is massively endorsed by people on all sides in Hong Kong as well as here as the true foundation for the future.

On my hon. Friend's second point, I am always ready and glad to receive advice from him on any subject, but the advice that one must regard as being more decisive is that which comes from Hong Kong.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity to reply to the question asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) about whether the Government will recognise the trade mission, and if so what extent, that is due to visit Peking later this year?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The position of that mission is still under consideration, and will be addressed according to the conclusions set out at the end of the Madrid summit last week. We certainly shall not sustain fresh subsidised business, but it would be foolish—this is the strong advice that I have received from Hong Kong—to move in the direction of an economic embargo on the People's Republic of China.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will certainly bear in mind the claims of hon. Members who have not been called on the statement.

Rail Dispute

4.18 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"today's rail strike."

The matter raises a number of issues that deserve urgent debate, not only in respect of one-day stoppages but in the event of escalation of the present dispute. First there is the recalcitrant attitude that management and unions have adopted about negotiating terms. While they argue not about whether to talk but about where, the rest suffer.

Secondly, there is the question of the future of monopolies such as the railways and London Transport. Can we tolerate being held to ransom in this way? Should we not urgently discuss alternative structures? Is it not time to get on with opening up competition by privatising London Buses?

Thirdly, we must discuss how best to combat the effects of the stoppages. Extra car parking space merely exacerbates the problem of heavy traffic. More radical solutions are surely necessary if we are to fight back.

We need to establish a political consensus in tackling the wildcat strike, in the growing belief that such action by public service employees should be illegal. That means ascertaining the Opposition's views. If that leads them to a new set of principles, as with that adopted on nuclear weapons, it is all the more welcome.

Millions of our citizens are facing transport difficulties each week, with no apparent end in sight. Those difficulties and how to overcome them should be discussed by the House. Nothing is more urgent or relevant.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member seeks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"today's rail strike."

I have listened to the hon. Member with care. As he knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 20 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that the matter that the hon. Member has raised does not meet the criteria of the Standing Order. I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

4.20 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask you to recall that at Scottish Question Time this afternoon, following question No. 3 from my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie), you were kind enough to call me to ask a supplementary question? In reply to my question, the Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth)—said that he was quoting from a private conversation. I therefore seek your guidance. First, have not you and many of your distinguished predecessors frowned upon the use of private conversations in the Chamber and is not the practice to be deplored, especially when it comes from a Minister? Secondly, as the Minister clearly misunderstood the name of the organisation about which I was seeking information and confused the Scottish Central Film Library with the Scottish Film Council, has he sought to withdraw the misleading impression that he gave the House, which remains the only decent thing for him to do and what the House would expect of him?

Mr. Speaker: I confirm that private conversations should be private. As for whether the Minister is prepared to withdraw his comment, that is not a matter for me.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. That was not the only occasion during Scottish Questions when some of us thought that the behaviour of the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) did not match what most of us expect of Ministers or, in fact, from hon. Members on either side of the House. On one occasion, the hon. Gentleman told my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) to shut his mouth. That was the expression that he used. The Minister has a responsibility to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the House to go to the Dispatch Box and apologise for his behaviour during Question Time.

Mr. Speaker: I certainly did not hear anything of that kind. We should move on.

European Community documents. Not moved.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Speaker: Not moved.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the 11 motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the London Docklands Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (Port of London Authority and London Borough of Newham) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Black Country Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (Borough of Walsall) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Black Country Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (General) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Leeds Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (British Railways Board) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Leeds Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (General) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the London Docklands Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (Thames Water Authority) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Merseyside Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (General) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Merseyside Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (Transport Land) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Sheffield Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (British Railways Board) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (Port of Tyne Authority and British Railways Board) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (Various Local Authorities) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Prevention of Child Abduction

4.22 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make satisfactory arrangements to prevent the illegal removal of children beyond the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom courts; and for connected purposes.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) and the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who have been working on behalf of representatives of children who have been abducted from the United Kingdom. I hope that, following today's discussion, all hon. Members with a common interest in this issue will join together to solve this growing problem.

On 22 May this year, in the spring Adjournment debate, I raised the case of my constituent, Mr. Colin Winstanley, whose children were removed from the jurisdiction of United Kingdom courts without his consent and, so far as I can ascertain, without the active consent of the children. Both children were taken by their mother to the Bulgarian capital, Sofia, and over the past few months Mr. Winstanley has not been able to make satisfactory arrangements to see his children. With the assistance of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the children have been contacted belatedly and have expressed their desire to see their father and grandparents.

Tragically, Mr. Winstanley and his children are part of a growing army of forgotten people caught up in the Pied Piper world of child abduction. The tug of love syndrome means that 500 or more of our nation's little children are stolen, kidnapped and abducted each year, leaving a trail of grief-stricken mothers and sometimes fathers, in their wake.

Child abduction is a special crime, mainly involving parents—or sometimes grandparents—acting out of a perverted or overwhelming sense of love, fear of losing custody proceedings or desire to seek revenge in the wake of a broken relationship. The problem is growing and I contend that it has reached epidemic proportions.

On 12 June 1987, *Law* magazine reported on the issue, saying that it was estimated that between 200 and 500 cases occurred each year. It continued:

"The scale of the problem flows from the increase in the number of international marriages and the high rate of separations, combined with ease of travel and employment overseas—and the belief of parents who have been denied custody here that the abduction of their children will result in a more favourable order in another country."

The problem is not confined to marriages where there is an international element. In August 1981, Jean Burt's British ex-husband flew out to Kuwait with her son Graham and instead of returning home from his holiday, he remained in Kuwait. She went to Kuwait and got a wardship order from the local courts. She held an English wardship order of custody which was finally recognised by the Kuwaiti authorities. She obtained an order for them to direct her husband to give up the child and to return him to the United Kingdom in April 1983. Unfortunately, there are few such instances of a successful conclusion in abduction cases. Moreover, Jean had to raise £13,000 for the return of her child. Even if the other country is prepared to co-operate, the child usually remains abducted and outside the jurisdiction of United Kingdom courts unless the mother has substantial resources at her disposal.

[Mr. Ian McCartney]

In the cases with which I and other hon. Members have dealt, one has an overwhelming feeling of helplessness. One sees the home without the child, with quiet, well-kept bedrooms, but none of the loving clutter of children, none of the screams of joy, the tears, the smell that always accompanies the child, the hugs or the feelings of warmth and safety. They are all denied to the parent and child who have been dragged from each other in a moment of madness and despair. It is almost as though the child has died and one sees the small shrine of photographs and toys. But it is worse than that. There is an unconsolable grief which cannot be exorcised.

Parliament has a special responsibility to the nation's children. We must act as their guardians and defenders in a real sense and, in the final analysis, be their ultimate liberators, acting to return them to the United Kingdom. Despite the admirable sentiments behind the Hague convention and the Child Abduction and Custody Act 1985, the abduction of our nation's children is on the increase. So far, the equivalent of three average-sized primary schools have been emptied of their pupils. More than 500 children are missing, never to be returned home and often living in socially hostile and disorienting environments. Sadly, many hon. Members of all parties are coming to the conclusion that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not want to meddle in so-called "family affairs". The children are regarded as a diplomatic embarrassment and a nuisance which could interfere with diplomatic relations.

The 1985 Act has, in practice, failed to protect hundreds of innocent little victims of the unique social crime of child abduction. As recently as 1 July this year, a report in *The Independent* investigating the issue said of the Act:

> "In practice, the children's return is rarely prompt; case after case has been trapped in the morass of competing legal systems and bureaucracies. To pay for travel, accommodation, legal costs and, where the husband has gone underground, a private investigator, requires considerable private funds, which most of these women simply do not have."

The Foreign Office has stated that it is vital that taxpayers' money should not be wasted. That is rich indeed, from a Government who have spent millions of pounds chasing around the courts of the world to prevent publication of various memoirs about the secret service. If such resources are at the Lord Chancellor's disposal, they should be used to chase around the courts of the world on behalf of little children who have been abducted and wish to return to the United Kingdom but cannot do so.

In 1984, Lord Brandon was reported as saying in the House of Lords:

> "I see no good reason why, in relation to the kidnapping of a child, it should not in all cases be the absence of the child's consent which is material, whatever its age may be. In the case of a very young child, it would not have the understanding or the intelligence to give its consent".

Abduction removes the child's right to consent. The challenge that my Bill seeks to address is the child's inability to have a say about its abduction.

The Bill will have four main provisions. The first is the establishment of a children's ombudsman to provide legal aid, advice and assistance to retrieve children currently illegally abducted to places outside the jurisdiction of United Kingdom courts. The ombudsman will also provide advice about preventing abduction and will mediate between the Governments and legal systems of the countries to which children have been abducted.

Secondly, the Bill will provide resources to reunite the National Council for Abducted Children with other voluntary self-help groups. Thirdly, the Bill will seek to amend current court practices and will provide for the issuing of advice to judges to ensure the automatic surrender of passports to the courts during custody proceedings and the automatic entry of child custody decisions in the passports of the parents or guardians and of the children concerned.

Fourthly, the Bill will seek the establishment and maintenance of a register of abducted children, because at the moment we do not even know how many children have been abducted.

If the House were to fail in this matter, and if the Government were to fail to take action, a blot would be left on the character of the House and a stain on the nation's conscience.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Ian McCartney, Mr. Roger Stott, Mr. Frank Doran, Mr. Jimmy Hood, Mr. Eric Martlew, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mrs. Llin Golding, Mr. Frank Cook, Mr. Keith Bradley, Mr. David Hinchliffe, Mr. Gerry Steinberg and Ms. Dawn Primarolo.

PREVENTION OF CHILD ABDUCTION

Mr. Ian McCartney accordingly presented a Bill to make satisfactory arrangements to prevent the illegal removal of children beyond the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom courts; and for connected purposes. And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 7 July and to be printed. [Bill 164.]

Opposition Day

[16TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Training

4.32 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to move,

That this House, noting the fiasco of Employment Training which has reached only 40 per cent. of the Government's target and now has a drop-out rate of nearly 50 per cent., as both employers and trainees reject the programme as under-funded, poor quality and low-paid, and noting that job-related training for 16 to 19 year olds have been constantly falling in recent years, calls on the Government to remedy the growing skills shortage by investment in training which matches the funding, quality, skills and economic commitment of the United Kingdom's major competitor countries.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Meacher: In 1992, with the advent of the internal market, Britain will face economic pressures at least as intense and competitive as those we faced on our entry to the Common Market 16 years ago. The coverage and quality of our skills training will then become one of our key economic weapons. It is the contention of the Opposition that the Government have consistently and drastically failed to develop that aspect of the country's economic defences so that today we have an adult training programme which is spurned by employers and trainees alike and which is poised to collapse before it has reached even half its target.

There was no lack of ministerial hype at the programme's inception last September, when the Secretary of State for Employment said:

"Employment training is the largest and most ambitious training programme ever undertaken, and the scope and opportunity it offers to longer-term unemployed people is unrivalled anywhere in the world."

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): Hear, hear.

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman says, "Hear, hear," which serves to make my point.

However, the reality is rather different. Five months after the programme started, the *Financial Times* reported:

"The Government is cutting the number of places on its employment training scheme by 10 per cent. because not enough people have joined."

On the same day, *The Independent* reported that more than 70 local authorities of all political persuasions had withdrawn from the scheme. One of those, the Tory-controlled council covering the Prime Minister's constituency, closed its 400-place ET scheme. A report prepared by officials at Barnet council, which was endorsed by councillors, stated:

"One of the factors blamed for the failure was that most participants in the old Community Programme, where maximum earnings are £60 a week, refused to switch to ET where they are allowed only normal benefit plus £10 expenses."

That confirms everything that the Opposition have always said.

The Secretary of State's TV extravaganza got it slightly wrong. To the bars of what I can only describe as somewhat incongruous music, the extravaganza proclaimed:

"We'll train the workers without jobs to do the jobs without workers."

It really meant:

"We'll train the workers without jobs to do the jobs without wages."

At the launch of ET on 1 September last year, the Secretary of State made his objective very clear. Amid enormous media fanfare, he declared:

"Employment training will provide training for some 600,000 people a year."

Nine months on, by which time the target of 450,000 places should have been filled, only 187,000 places have been filled. The Government have achieved just 41 per cent. of their target. However, internal confidential Department of Employment management papers, which I have seen, paint a bleaker picture. They show that no fewer than 117,000 people have already dropped out of the scheme and that there is an overall dropout rate of no less than 46 per cent. Worse still, the dropout rate is accelerating fast. In January the dropout rate was 36 per cent. In February it was 41 per cent. In March it was 57 per cent. and in April—the last month for which figures are available—it was 75 per cent.

The Secretary of State may well screw up his face, because those figures come from his Department. If the trend continues, the number of leavers each month will soon be larger than the number of starters. On that evidence, the number of trainees on ET could begin to fall before the scheme's first anniversary—ET's first anniversary could also be its last.

At the start of the scheme, the Secretary of State was full of overblown rhetoric about the employers' response. On 29 December, according to a Department of Employment press notice, he announced:

"Britain's biggest companies have given Britain's biggest adult training programme a ringing endorsement into the New Year."

A little earlier, he was carried away enough to state:

"The response from providers to the challenge of Employment Training has been magnificent, and the Training Commission now has in place a comprehensive network of training agents and training managers."

Six months later, on 12 June, in answer to a parliamentary question from me, the Secretary of State was forced to admit the truth behind the billboard waffle. He had to admit that only 13 major companies had signed up with ET on a national scale and that only two of them had filled more than half the places for which they had contracted. If the employers' response has been so magnificent, why has Habitat contracted for 200 places, but filled none of them? Why has Mothercare contracted for 50 places but filled none? Why has Heron Service Stations contracted for 81 places but filled only one?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is either knowingly deceiving the House or deceiving himself. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the Secretary of State can make some amendments to what he has just said.

Mr. Fowler: Of course I will. The hon. Gentleman is mis-stating the position. He has just given the impression —all hon. Members have heard it—that only 13 major companies have been associated with employment

[Mr. Fowler]

training. That is the clear implication. He is quoting only one part—that is, the numbers who are with the large companies unit of the Department of Employment. One hundred and twenty major companies, and 1,000 companies over all, have contracted to do employment training. That is why what the hon. Gentleman has said is deeply misleading. His remarks about the numbers are also misleading. He is either doing that intentionally or without knowledge. He is confusing the number of filled places with the throughput in employment training. What he has stated so far is very misleading.

Mr. Meacher: I obviously asked a rather pointed and embarrassing question. I was quoting from the answer that I was given. It is the right hon. Gentleman himself who says that only 13 companies have joined up with ET nationally. That is the fact and that is what he said only three weeks ago.

Mr. Fowler: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I will give way once more.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman can at least concede that what I have said—that is, that 120 major companies are working with ET—is truthful.

Mr. Meacher: In that case, why was that not in the original answer? Why is it that the answer that I quoted were the right hon. Gentleman's words?

Mr. Fowler *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: I will not give way again. The right hon. Gentleman has a lot more explaining to do, so we will reserve the opportunity for him.

Perhaps he could explain also the findings in the report of the Institute of Manpower Studies, which was commissioned by his own Department and which he so coyly refuses to publish. The institute interviewed 40 large companies, not just the 13 that I have been talking about. Most of them employ more than 1,000 people—precisely the group about whom the right hon. Gentleman is talking—but they did not give ET the ringing endorsement that the right hon. Gentleman claimed. In no uncertain terms, they criticised the Department of Employment's Training Agency for its

"excessive inflexibility, jargon, bureaucracy and confusion."

I wonder whether the right hon. Gentleman will confirm that that is what they think.

The right hon. Gentleman also had pretensions that the scheme would be attractive for the unemployed. In September, he announced with great flourish that

"it will offer training at every level from basic skills to technician level skills, and will enable unemployed people to acquire the skills they need to find and keep work."

The reality six months later, as *The Guardian* reported on 24 March, under a headline "Unemployed shun ET", is that

"Targets on the Government's . . . Employment Training scheme . . . have been drastically reduced by between 30 and 50 per cent. in some parts of the country because of poor demand for places."

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I will not give way. I want to get on; it is a short debate.

At about the same time, the *Financial Times* reported:

"Employment Training . . . is facing mounting difficulties in attracting trainees in the north-east, an area with one of the highest unemployment rates in the country."

It went on to state that in Cleveland, for example,

"only 81 of the 450 places with employers have been filled."

It is altogether a sobering and humiliating story, yet the Government's advertising blurb still continues to take on a life of its own, divorced from any reality.

"Custom-made to give people the skills they need for tomorrow's jobs"

is another of the Government's slogans. What happens on the ground is a rather different story. I recently received a letter from a man in Wales who applied to go on ET for agricultural maintenance, with a view to starting his own business. In his own words, this is what happened to him:

"Day 1. Went to local office at 9 am, filled in two forms and sat until 4 pm. The woman in charge was a senior team leader who was also on a training scheme, and appeared to have no idea why I or anyone else was there.

Day 2. Reported at 9 am sat around till 3.30 went home.

Day 3. Same routine, but had fire drill.

Day 4. Same routine—despite repeated inquiries, could obtain no information regarding the training programme.

Day 5. Finally visited training centre forty-one miles away. . .

The workshop was . . . an old shed, with rubbish strewn about, bits of steel, old engine parts and no clear working surfaces . . . The gas cutting gear had perished pipes, and there was no evidence of goggles; the electrical equipment had no safety cut-outs. The only supervisor I saw was also responsible for a hundred and forty acres, two workshops, livestock and twelve trainees. There was no trained instructor, in fact they are advertising for one.

Trainees on farm work were left unsupervised to drive tractors with no brakes or safety frames, one trainee was operating a mechanical digger with the engine overheating to such an extent that steam was coming from it."

In case the right hon. Gentleman thinks that that was a rather special or one-off letter, I have had a mass of letters about ET, which would be almost funny if the matter were not absolutely depressing. In the Wirral, a trainee painter and decorator was taught by unqualified people who previously worked in landscape gardening. In London, two unemployed people who wanted to be a chef and a bricklayer were sent on an amateur video-making course because there was nothing else available. In Liverpool, a car mechanic was working in a swimming pool—presumably not on a car—and a trainee refrigerator engineer was sent to insulate lofts.

One might have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would have responded to those inanities with a measure of humility by redoubling his efforts to make his ET course rather more relevant and appropriate. What he has redoubled is the advertising budget, which is now running at a cool £9 million. The right hon. Gentleman has told training managers who provide the training to adjust not the relevance of their ET courses but their publicity. They have been told to provide the Department of Employment with "good news stories" which

"it is essential that we publicise."

He even had the bright idea of asking "ET graduates" to participate in an "ET roll of honour" which is to be

"displayed prominently for maximum publicity in unemployment benefit offices and job centres".

Instead of all the ludicrous and false packaging to conceal a massive failure on the ground, and instead of the glossy advertising costing £9 million, the right hon. Gentleman would do far better to direct taxpayers' money

and his own Department's efforts to improving the lamentable quality of training on ET and giving employers and trainees a proper deal.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I do not know whether it is just a further example of the county of Kent being superior to any other place in the country, but the experience of ET in my part of Kent is almost unidentifiable with the hon. Gentleman's. I would be interested to hear whether he has letters of that kind from Kent.

Mr. Meacher: I am sure that we shall be interested to hear from the hon. Gentleman if he can produce some real examples, because clearly he is embarrassed by the roll call of disasters that I have mentioned. I will be surprised if Kent does not have its disasters, too.

The Government's propaganda on ET is riddled with manipulation and deceit. The Government profess to favour the training of married women to fill the demographic gap. The Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee), said a week ago:

"Employers must look beyond traditional sources of recruitment to provide the workforce of the 1990s. Ninety per cent. of the growth in the labour market in the 1990s will be women and many of these will be women 'returners'."

The point is that the Government refuse to make married women eligible for ET child care allowances. When Kay Jackson, a married woman with three pre-school aged children, challenged that at an industrial tribunal in January as being in breach of the Sex Discrimination Act, she won. But what did the Secretary of State then do? Instead of extending ET child care allowances to married women, he took them away from single parents who already received them.

The Government profess to be in favour of developing the voluntary sector, yet ET is destroying it. In Birmingham, the Voluntary Services Council was forced to close its 400-place ET scheme earlier this year. Only two months ago, the Council for Social Action in Manchester, which in the north had been a flagship project with 1,000 trainees, was forced into liquidation with £500,000 of debts and was forced to make 200 staff redundant. In April of last year, 220,000 community programme workers were in post performing a whole range of social and community services. Now there are only 97,000 ET trainees in such project-based services. That decline has had a devastating impact on community provision for the most disadvantaged in our society, such as the elderly and the disabled, which had been built up on community provision funding, and is now being destroyed.

If Britain is being miserably served by ET in meeting adult training needs for 1992, youth training is being handled with an equal lack of drive and imagination. The right hon. Gentleman keeps telling us about the demographic gap. We all know that there will be a 25 per cent. shortfall in the number of 16 and 17-year-olds over the next five years. However, the right hon. Gentleman then proposes to fill that gap with more married women, while denying them child care allowances, or with more older workers, while focusing ET on the under-50s.

What the right hon. Gentleman will not accept is the obvious policy of upgrading YTS and ridding it of its deserved label of cheap labour. The fact is that still less than 30 per cent. of trainees who leave YTS obtain a vocational qualification; still the general experience is of low-cost training, patchily equipping young people with skills that are not in short supply; and still, as the Confederation of British Industry reminds us in its report today, more than 100,000 16-year-olds enter the labour market every year with no training at all.

The past two years have shown that it is still true that three quarters of YTS trainees drop out of the scheme prematurely and that Britain still has a participation rate for 16 and 17-year-olds in education and training trailing 20 to 30 per cent. behind that of our main competitors in Germany, the United States and Japan. I am glad to see that the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science is supporting that.

The Government's sole answer to those manifest deficiencies of training, as in every other sector, is privatisation—selling off the skill centres and replacing the training agency by employer-dominated training enterprise councils. In fact, the sale of skill centres has nothing to do with improving the quality of training, but it has everything to do with asset stripping on the model of Royal Ordnance. The management buy-out covers only 20 of the 58 skill centres, and I understand that for the rest there is such lack of interest that probably one third of the sites will not even have a bidder unless they are given the incentive of a quick property killing—such as at Twickenham, Perivale and Slough, along the M4 corridor, or Lambeth skill centre in the middle of docklands, which I understand already has B2 planning permission now granted for any office or industrial development.

It is characteristic, but shameful, that the Government are far more interested in selling off the country's training assets than in investing in high-quality training to match our competitors. However, the TECs are not proving popular even with the employers who will control them. Presumably the Prime Minister thought that their appeal would be irresistible when, in the blaze of publicity at the launch of the TEC prospectus in March, she called on British employers to recreate the traditions of the medieval guild system

"when father taught son . . . and when apprentices learned from their masters."

However, I am glad to note that the reintroduction of master-servant grading holds less attraction for employers than for the Prime Minister as an obvious model for training.

It is employers, not just the unions, who have been expressing considerable disquiet about both the impact and representativeness of the TECs. It is employers who are complaining that the creation of 80 self-governing TECs will lead to the fragmentation of training and the undermining of industrywide and national standards. I understand that the Government are apparently now even proposing to phase out the approved training organisers, who are the one sure guarantee of quality control. It is employers who have been saying that they fear that the TECs are a smoke screen to disguise the Government's retreat from funding industrial training.

It was, in fact, the employers, in a letter from the Association of British Chambers of Commerce to the right hon. Gentleman in February, who disowned the TECs by complaining:

"there will be no mechanism by which it can be ensured that TEC boards, once appointed, do not become self-perpetuating and take decisions in isolation from the local . . . communities."

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No, I would prefer to finish. Owing to the earlier business, there is a shortness of time in this debate.

With friends like that, it is scarcely surprising that out of the 100 TECs that the Government were originally planning, they have had only 22 applications from employers. It is scarcely surprising also that the flagship TECs which were planned for London and Birmingham have been ignominiously postponed indefinitely due to in-fighting and inefficiency.

Mr. Tracey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Meacher: No, I am going to finish.

Not only have the three that have been planned for London been put on ice, but the right hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Tracey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has made it clear that he is not giving way.

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman has not even been able to get off the ground the Birmingham TEC covering his constituency.

There can be no sharper difference between the political parties than in policies on training. Under this Tory Government, British companies now spend on training only one third of what is spent by German companies. Only 30 per cent. of our work force have recognised qualifications equivalent to one O-level, compared with 70 per cent. in Germany. Yet the Government are intending to cut YTS funding by £25 million this year in cash terms and to cut the real resources for ET over the next three years.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No, I shall not give way. I shall finish.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has made it clear that he will not give way. This is simply wasting time, when there is very little of it.

Mr. Meacher: Labour, by contrast, proposes a detailed programme to transform Britain's training culture. YTS will be replaced by a traineeship scheme offering recognised qualifications and quality training for up to four years. All employers will be required to promote training for their staff, setting a minimum number of hours training that each employee should expect each year. In addition, we also propose an opportunity training programme open to all adults who wish to retrain in skills of regional economic need or national importance.

Because we recognise that a national training strategy has been conspicuous by its absence in the past 10 years, because we recognise that such a strategy is vital to Britain's future and because we are determined to implement it, we shall press this motion tonight.

4.59 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and add instead thereof:

"noting that Employment Training is the largest and fastest growing training programme for adults ever mounted in this country, and noting the success of YTS in equipping young people for jobs or further education, and the record scale of public resources devoted to training, welcomes the Government's achievements in improving the quantity and quality of training in Britain and the major further steps it now proposes to take to meet the training needs of the 1990's.".

The speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was almost barren of any suggestion, until his last words. Above all, it was wrong in every aspect of every area that it covered. The hon. Gentleman was wrong about employment training, he was wrong about YTS, he was wrong about the Skills Training Agency and, above all, he was wrong about the training and enterprise councils. When the hon. Gentleman talks of a lack of enthusiasm for TECs, one wonders where he has been for the past few months. There has been a tremendous enthusiasm for them and I must tell the House that the first application for a TEC came from Oldham, the hon. Gentleman's constituency. The hon. Gentleman was as wrong about the TECs as he was about every other issue he raised.

Mr. Ian Bruce: The Floor has been held for 27 minutes by the Opposition Front Bench spokesman. The Labour party has just published its policy review, and although all sides of the House recognise the importance of training, we have listened to a 27-minute speech that was devoid of any new proposals to take training forward. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is an absolute disgrace?

Mr. Fowler: Yes. In every respect the speech was revealing of the hon. Member for Oldham, West and of the way in which he leads for the Opposition in this matter.

I welcome the opportunity to debate training, because, as my hon. Friend has said, no issue is more important for the future economic prosperity of the country. It is crucial that we take steps now to ensure that we have the supply of skills that our economy will need in the 1990s and beyond. Training is the key to economic growth, to jobs and to prosperity. That is the case for training, and I welcome this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to it.

The Opposition have shown a curious sense of timing in choosing to debate training on this particular day when the railways and much of London have been crippled by strikes. It is curious that the hon. Gentleman talked so freely about the national interest in relation to training, when he is so blind to the national interest in relation to strikes. It is especially curious that the hon. Gentleman freely condemns everything that the Government have done for training when he is so reluctant to condemn trade union leaders for calling strikes that bring hardship to thousands of people.

When the hon. Gentleman talks about the importance of employment and training, does it occur to him that strikes were one of the main reasons why we lost so many jobs in the 1970s? We are not prepared to take any lectures from him on training, any more than we are prepared to take any lectures from him on industrial relations.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Would my right hon. Friend care to speculate on whether the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) is speaking for the Labour party, given that, last September, there were grave differences between the hon. Gentleman and the leader of his party and between him and the trade unions?

Mr. Fowler: It would not be right for me to speculate on that as I have no intention of intruding on the private grief of the Opposition on this matter.

The necessary background to this debate is the employment situation. It is important to consider the current situation and how it will develop in the 1990s to draw lessons for training. In the past two years, the employment situation radically improved. Unemployment has now fallen for 34 consecutive months. *[Interruption.]* I should have thought that the hon. Member for Oldham, West would welcome that reduction rather than laugh at it. Since the general election, unemployment has fallen by more than 1 million, and unemployment in this country is now well below the European Community average. During the past two years, long-term unemployment has fallen by a record 500,000 and it is falling faster than the rate of general unemployment. That is of special significance to employment training and to other adult programmes.

Mr. Meacher: What about training?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman must understand that employment is the background to training.

During the past two years, unemployment among young people under the age of 24 has fallen by 41 per cent. and it is now half the EC average. It has fallen so much and so quickly because we have had an unprecedented increase in jobs. Now, 26·5 million people are at work in this country, more than ever before in our history. During the past six years, nearly 3 million new jobs have been created, and job opportunities have improved dramatically. That is illustrated by the fact that there are about 600,000 job vacancies in the economy now. In the space of a few years, we have moved from a position of labour surplus to one of potential shortage, particularly among the groups on whom employers have traditionally relied for their skilled and qualified staff.

Just as important are the profound demographic changes that are now taking place and which will affect every profession and every occupation. In the next five years, the number of school leavers coming on to the labour market will fall sharply. The number of 16 to 19-year-olds in the population will have fallen by more than 1 million between 1983 and 1993, and shows no sign of returning to its previous level. Therefore, we must make full use of our potential in this country. We must bring new recruits into the labour market.

The major message is that training must be at the top of the agenda. Training is as vital for young people as it is for unemployed people to bring them into employment. Training is also vital for employed people to enable them to develop their full potential. Unless the case for training is set against the background of employment, we are debating in a vacuum. It is foolish to argue otherwise.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. Friend probably has not heard the extremely good news from Cleveland today, where one firm has announced a £80 million investment and the creation of 1,000 jobs, while another has announced a £50 million investment and the creation of 600 jobs.

Mr. Fowler: That is good news, and I hope that even the Opposition, in their present mood, will feel inclined to welcome that.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that there are distinct regional differences in training needs? Much of today's argument recognises that those differences are vast. The national scheme has missed the boat completely and has failed to recognise that the long-term unemployed have particular training needs different from those in employment. When will the Government give local authorities the opportunity to develop training needs to suit local requirements and thus the opportunity to move away from the national scheme that has missed everybody?

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to the hon. Lady, who has, reasonably succinctly, put the case for training and enterprise councils. The point of those councils is that we are devolving power to the local areas. It is crucial that this problem should not be left merely to schools and colleges. Improvements are obviously important, and the reforms of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education will undoubtedly improve the position. We should remember that eight out of 10 people who will be in the work force in the year 2000, are already in the work force and have left the education system. Side by side with education reform, we need the training reform which is now taking place.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West was scathing about employers' contributions, and unfairly so. He fails to recognise that employers already spend about £18 billion a year on training, which gives the lie to the claim that we are suffering from employer neglect. The true position is shown by the evidence——

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn) *rose——*

Mr. Fowler: May I continue?

The true position is clear from the evidence in the labour force survey which was published earlier this year and showed the number of people receiving training. Those figures, which specifically exclude people on Government training programmes, show that the number of people in training has risen significantly in each of the past five years. The number of people in training during the relevant four weeks—taking a snapshot of that period —increased from 1·8 million in 1984 to 2·8 million in 1988. That is the figure for a four-week period, not the 12-month period. During the period from spring 1984 to spring 1988, the number of people in training rose by more than 50 per cent. That is the trend——

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin) *rose——*

Mr. Fowler: I shall not give way. I have given way several times already—indeed, far more often than did the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

The latest labour force survey shows that the number of people receiving training has risen for every age group. It also shows that 70 per cent. of those in training are receiving part of their training away from the job. Those figures show that employers are increasing their investment in training and that the number of trainees is growing year by year.

Mr. Grocott *rose——*

Mr. Fowler: I have made it clear that I shall not give way.

Mr. Grocott *rose——*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State has constantly made it clear that he is not giving way and such behaviour is merely consuming time in this short debate.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Member for Oldham, West tried to play down the Government's contribution to training. Again, the facts simply do not support what he said. In each of the past five years, the Government have spent about £3 billion on training programmes. If we contrast that with the record of the last Labour Government, we find that between 1974 and 1979, expenditure on training was £500 million. In real terms, we are spending three times more than the last Labour Government. The position for young people today is a far cry from the black days of the collapse of apprenticeships at the end of the 1970s. Today, more than 386,000 young people are being trained under the youth training scheme. They are to be found in every sector of the economy and at all levels of skill.

Since YTS began in 1983, well over 2 million young people have been trained through this programme, and more than 1 million have been trained since the two-year YTS began in April 1986. Some 63 per cent. of people who complete the two-year YTS gain vocational qualifications and more than 80 per cent. of them go into jobs or further training. By any standard, that is a substantial achievement.

Mr. Grocott: Before the Secretary of State continues with his selective use of statistics and boasting, will he confirm the disgraceful reply given by his right hon. Friend the Minister of State a week or so ago, when asked about the level of engineering apprenticeships in the west midlands area, about which he should know something. He said that, since 1979, the level of engineering apprenticeships in the west midlands had collapsed by 50 per cent. Will the Secretary of State apologise to the House for that appalling record on real skills training, for which the Government bear the responsibility?

Mr. Fowler: I shall not do that, because we now have almost 400,000 young people in training. However attached the hon. Gentleman may be to the apprenticeship scheme, one reason why that scheme collapsed was the inflexibility of the apprenticeships, which meant that, whatever happened, the scheme was going to change.

With the decline in the number of school leavers entering employment, it is more essential than ever to establish firm and constructive links between schools and employers, and to ensure that young people starting work for the first time can achieve the educational standards which employers seek and have access to proper training when they move into employment.

For those reasons, I am announcing today that the Government have agreed to support a further 11 inner-city compacts. The essence of the compact is that employers guarantee jobs with training for school leavers who reach specified levels of attainment while in full-time education. The first 30 compacts have made an excellent start, and the response of employers, young people and schools has been enthusiastic. More than 230 schools will be taking part in compacts this September, covering 30,000 young people. Well over 1,000 employers and many training organisations have agreed to support compacts by offering guaranteed jobs and training. The Government are providing more than £16 million to support the development of compacts over the next four years.

I have no doubt that the compacts are an important development. They show how young people can benefit from a partnership between employers and schools to ensure that achievements in full-time education are rewarded by training and jobs and, most importantly, point the way to a much closer and more constructive link between school and employment, which can only be to the benefit of young people and employers alike. I recognise too that there is even further potential the development of new compacts.

I turn now to the issue of the training of unemployed people over the age of 18. The wording of the motion and the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West shows an ignorance of the nature and purpose of employment training. The programme was originally designed by the Manpower Services Commission for a maximum of 300,000 people in training at any one time. Employment training now has nearly 200,000 in training. That has been achieved after the programme has been in operation for less than 10 months. Even the hon. Gentleman's arithmetic will tell him that 200,000 is a good deal more than 40 per cent. of 300,000.

To have achieved 200,000 filled places in less than 10 months in a programme starting virtually from scratch is an enormous achievement. No previous programme has come remotely near this rate of expansion. For example, the community programme had managed to fill only 57,000 places after it had been in operation for nine months. Furthermore, since I announced the decision to introduce employment training in November 1987, unemployment has fallen by nearly 800,000, and longer-term unemployment has fallen faster than unemployment generally. There has been a huge reduction in the group of people for whom the programme was designed.

That is regarded as good news by everyone except the hon. Member for Oldham, West and one or two of his hon. Friends. It makes the achievement of 200,000 filled places in employment training after less than 10 months of operation all the more remarkable. Almost 40 per cent. of those starting on the programme have been unemployed for more than two years.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West repeated his claim that employers are turning their backs on employment training. That is wholly without foundation. He is confusing the figures that he asked for on the national contracting arrangements with the overall figures for employers. More than 1,000 employers are providing training places under employment training; about 120 major employers are involved; 27 major employers have contracted with my Department to provide the full range of training under ET. They include companies such as Ferranti, Grand Metropolitan, Pilkington, Laing, Comet and Wimpey——

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford) *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: If the hon. Gentleman waits a minute, he will find out something.

Between them, these major employers have contracted to provide almost 15,000 places. Some contracted fairly recently, but almost 8,000 of those places have already been filled. In addition, more than 90 other major employers have contracted to provide training places. They include firms such as Mercury Telecommunications, British Nuclear Fuels, Barratts and W. H. Smith. The number of employers who want to become involved with ET and to provide training places for the programme is growing all the time.

The criticisms of employment training levelled by the hon. Member for Oldham, West lack credibility since, from the beginning, he has done everything possible to damage the programme. He opposed it even before the ink was dry on the original report from the Manpower Services Commission, which was fully supported at that time by the TUC. The Labour party's record of opposition to employment training has been shabby and disreputable and it does not entitle them to sit in judgment on the programme.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West has been quick to condemn the decision to set up the training and enterprise councils. Contrary to everything he said and to everything that is happening outside the House, the response to my invitation to employers and others to come forward with proposals for setting up training and enterprise councils has been overwhelmingly enthusiastic. They are potentially the biggest revolution in training ever in this country, because they represent a deliberate and major devolution of responsibility for training from Whitehall and the old industry level training organisations to local communities.

The TECs will be different from the sort of training organisations that we have had before in three vital respects. First, they will be employer-led. The members of TECs will include people from many different organisations, but employers will be in the lead because they are the main customers for training and the main providers of it.

Secondly, TECs will have executive responsibility: they will not be talking shops or advisory councils. They will be responsible for running large-scale programmes such as ET and YTS. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the focus of TECs will be firmly on the local labour market. It is at the local level that training needs are most effectively identified and that practical solutions to them can best be developed.

Contrary to what the hon. Member for Oldham, West suggested about applications, we await next week's announcement of which applications have been approved. The whole House will then see how foolish the hon. Gentleman's words were. I have already received 30 applications to set up training and enterprise councils from all over the country, and about 50 others are now in preparation. In a few days from now, I shall announce the names of the first 19 TECs to receive development funding. With the applications that I have already received and with those which will come forward in the next few months, I am confident that we shall be able to cover England and Wales with TECs during the next year or so.

I believe that the councils represent the best hope of a lasting solution to the problem of skill shortages which has held back the growth of our economy time and again in the past 40 years. They are the key to ensuring that we have the skills that our industries and services will need in the 1990s and beyond.

I have tried to describe the Government's record on training and to give the facts about it in this country. Enormous changes are taking place in the world of training and a huge amount of training is taking place. A great many individuals, firms and training organisations are committed to training people in the skills that our country needs. They are training young people, adults, unemployed people and people in jobs, and they want to be allowed to get on with that job. They know how crucial it is to our future and they cannot understand why the hon. Member for Oldham, West appears to be so determined to turn training into a political battleground.

The hon. Gentleman has a bad reputation in respect of almost every aspect of training and we must ask him what he thinks he is achieving. What does he think is the point of continually attacking a programme such as YTS, which is training 386,000 of our school leavers? What is the point of continually attacking a programme like employment training, which is training almost 200,000 long-term unemployed people? What is the point of attacking employers who are investing £18 billion a year in training their own employees? What is the point of attacking training and enterprise councils, which constitute one of the most hopeful signs in training for decades?

It is time the Opposition acknowledged that the training efforts of employers' training organisations and trainees deserve the fullest possible support, because it is on their efforts and their success that the future of this country depends. We shall support them, and I ask the House to reject the ridiculous Opposition motion.

5.28 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I intend to be brief, because this is a short debate.

It is shameful that a Minister responsible for training and employment should ask why our spokesman is not worried about the strikes. If that is the best he can do, he should chuck it in.

I could take the Minister to parts of my constituency in which factories with a history of excellent industrial relations and increased productivity no longer exist because the bovver boys engaged in asset-stripping took them over and shut them down.

I hope that the Minister will learn from the lessons of the past 10 years and from the abuses that have taken place. He will be burying his head in the sand if he thinks that there have been no abuses of MSC schemes and YTS. Trainees should be given a decent wage for the work that they do. Why should anyone go out in the morning and work hard at training which will benefit the country when he is paid less than he would get on the dole? Often, these people are married men and women with family responsibilities.

I remember the late David Penhaligon saying in a debate that a farmer in his constituency went into the employment centre and asked, "When can I get my free boy?" That was the sort of attitude that people had to MSC schemes and the YTS. In my constituency, a garage employer took on five young boys, although he could not train them all properly. He told them that one out of the five would be kept on. The boys realised that one boy in particular stood out and they expected that at least he would be kept on. Instead, the employer sacked them all and started with another five. He simply used them as cheap labour. The boys told me this story and said that an alsatian dog was locked in the garage as a watchdog at night, and that every morning one of the boys had to start by clearing up the dog's dirt. I hope that the Minister does not regard that as trivial.

There were problems even with the most responsible employers in workshops in my constituency. In one, where some boys were taken on as part of the employment training scheme, the supervisor was so insensitive as to ask them, "How does it feel to be a liability to the state?" That was a cheek, coming from someone working in an industry which has had many subsidies from the Government. There was a sign in a baker's shop in Glasgow, "YTS for

[Mr. Michael J. Martin]

two years to train as a shop assistant." Ten years ago, a girl who went to work in a baker's shop as an assistant usually ended up as a manageress within two years.

There were problems with MSC schemes which created businesses. Some of the people setting up such schemes were charlatans. With the blessing of the MSC and the Minister's officials, directors set up a community company and started employing their wives, their relatives, their aunties and their uncles. The employees in turn set up other community businesses, so that they could employ yet more relatives. Other hon. Members have had similar experiences in their constituencies. When I raised these matters with the MSC, it wanted to turn a blind eye. The only conclusion that I can draw is that such schemes enable Ministers to say that people have come off the dole. The exercise is not about training or bringing assets to the community, or about getting the economy into better shape. It is aimed at allowing a Minister to get off the hook when the Opposition bring pressure to bear on him in the House.

I have another example. The Minister can check this up, as I will give him the name of the company. A scheme to train young people was being wound up because there was not enough training input, and some £13,000 was left in the kitty. Some of the trainers had the cheek to go to the trustees and say that they were being put on the dole and wanted the £13,000 to be split between them. That showed the nature of these so-called responsible people who had been put in charge of young trainees.

The company that I have already mentioned, which employed all the relatives of its directors, was also wound up. That company had word processors, printers, photocopiers and all sorts of other equipment. When I asked whether the equipment could be used by the community, I was told that the law required that it be put up for auction, so auctioneers came in and took what little was left.

I spoke to my branch of the Manufacturing, Science and Finance union—the metalworkers branch—because I thought that many of its members in Glasgow would be unemployed. To my surprise, I was told by the full-time officer that only a few members were on the books as unemployed. I said, "That's great—is there a boom in industry?" He said, "No. What is happening is this. The industry is suffering because over the past 10 years we have not started any apprentices, so those who have a skill are in high demand, but every year the work force gets older and it will disappear out of the work system altogether if we do not do something about it."

When the Minister considers proper apprenticeship schemes, will he also consider the adult apprenticeship schemes in countries such as New Zealand, Canada and the United States? Young people have told me that even though they are now married, they have never had a decent job. This is what happened to my father. During the depression, because he could not learn a trade, he became a labourer and would have stayed one all his life, had he not become a merchant seaman so as to get a decent living. As a young man he had no chance because he was involved in the great depression. Many people of that generation were bitter because they did not get that chance. We now have another generation like that, and they should be entitled to apprenticeships. If they can find the craftsmen to take them on, there should be a Government subsidy to allow it.

We have failed miserably, particularly in relation to women with grown-up families. We often talk about careers for women, but I suspect that we talk too much about the academics. I do not begrudge them getting jobs, but some women want semi-skilled jobs, such as ancillary nursing work. We talk about the family unit. Some women have stayed at home for 15 or 16 years of their marriage to make sure that there is a mother in the house when children come home, so that they have security at home and do not get into trouble. We are doing nothing to help such women to get back into industry, nursing or commerce. I hope that the Minister will examine that problem.

5.37 pm

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): I agreed with the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) when he said at the start of his speech that the competitiveness that we shall need in the single market after 1992 will depend on how well trained people are. Thereafter, I agreed with virtually nothing that he said as he carried on the practice of running down training schemes. Such training is vital, but people say that it is no good, and that what the Government, the country and employers do for training is inadequate. That is far from the truth.

The Opposition still scream about YTS. They have never quite got over the fact that when it was first introduced they said, as they said about ET, that it would be no good, that it would not work and that it would be of no use, but in fact it has been of use. It was noticeable that when it was extended for two years, the Opposition did not complain. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may be interested to know that in my local area a survey was done a few years ago by one of the Rotary clubs into what pupils about to leave secondary schools thought about YTS. The majority accepted that it presented a realistic opportunity to train in useful skills.

We talk about employment training and YTS for those who are not employed. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pointed out, however, we should remember that 80 per cent. of those who will be part of the commercial and industrial world in the year 2000 are already in employment. Training must therefore be available to that critically important sector. Measures announced by my right hon. Friend in the past two years, particularly those involving TECs, will make training in particular skills possible.

It will be impossible to provide the right training without unity among employers, educational institutions and work forces, along with local knowledge. No measures suggested by the Opposition have brought that about. The hon. Member for Oldham, West spoke of a national strategy, but given what we know of Labour's past ideas, such a strategy would almost certainly be a national straitjacket. Training would be controlled not by those who need it—employers and employees—but by a centralised notion of what is right for everyone everywhere, and we know that that does not work.

Over the years, the idea has developed that training must be oriented towards what companies want. Someone may be being trained for what could generally be described as trade, but what the company training him wants may

not be directly translatable to another company—for instance, an engineering firm. One advantage of many training courses provided by both the private sector and training boards is that they are custom-made. Changes introduced by the Government have encouraged training boards to become self-supporting institutions. The engineering industry training board has said that it can and will provide what employers want, in the private sector or as an independent organisation. Surely that is what is most important—to make people want training.

The Opposition have encouraged the idea that training is not necessarily useful. We heard a good deal of that in the days of union domination in manufacturing industry, when the suggestion that people should learn new skills and adapt to new circumstances was frequently resisted, as was the idea of change.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Will the hon. Gentleman give examples? I am sure that my hon. Friends with experience of trade union matters would join me in challenging the hon. Gentleman to refute my claim that the best training has taken place in those industries in which unions are recognised and participate fully in training.

Mr. Stevens: It is true that unions have been usefully involved in training, but in the 1960s any kind of change, including training, was often resented.

The Government have tried to sell the various schemes to the public. Opposition spokesmen have criticised our efforts on television, but we must make people aware of the importance of training within the industries for which they work. People with reasonably well paid jobs in companies whose immediate prospects seem good will not necessarily welcome the idea of being sent on a training scheme, especially one lasting for several weeks. They will have to put in a lot of effort, and at the end they will not automatically receive a pay rise or promotion. If we are to become competitive in time for 1992 we must train people for all kinds of jobs. People must be encouraged to come forward, but they will certainly not be encouraged to do so if others run down the training that is available.

Management training is also crucial, although it has been somewhat neglected in the past. Managers are very busy people in most organisations. Why should they train? They have a job to do where they are, and they may be doing it well. I was pleased to learn that Coventry polytechnic, which is near my constituency, recently set up a diploma in manufacturing management, along with the engineering industrial training board. The course is custom-made, and will have a direct return. Those who have taken part in the pilot scheme have been able to make successful contributions to the companies in which they have been training, even while still on the course.

That, surely, is how training should be seen—as a process which can provide a direct and immediate return, rather than a remote business which may provide an academic qualification. Employers can be overwhelmed by pieces of paper telling them that an applicant has passed this, that or the other. Training must be practical, and it must have the potential to produce a useful contribution to the industry concerned as quickly as possible. That is what all the schemes provided by the Government over the past few years have attempted to achieve. We want to provide recognised qualifications, but also to make those qualifications useful at an early stage—through the TECs, for instance.

The productivity that is fundamental to wealth and competitiveness must come from all employees, and there must therefore be accountability at every level. Decisions about who should be trained and how that training should be carried out are therefore as important as any other aspect of commercial activity. The measures introduced by my right hon. Friend have begun to move the country in the right direction for the first time. We have a strategy —with Government help and encouragement, we want companies to provide the right training at the right time to meet 1992 and the years that follow. The Opposition have not offered that. They believe that they have a plan, but most of their motion constituted a whinge about YTS and employment training. One sentence suggested that they might have something to offer, but we have not heard about it yet.

5.48 pm

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this debate as it concerns a subject that is of direct relevance to all too many of the constituents whose interests I have been sent here to represent. I do not know what world the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) inhabits, nor do I know much about Nuneaton, but he says that people must be prepared to come forward, say that they want training and outline the kind of training that they want. If he cares to accompany me on my next visit to Glasgow, Central, he will find that there is no shortage of people who are crying out for training and for jobs. They should not have to confront all the obstacles that he described that prevent them from getting that training. It is a subject to which I shall return, if I may, in due course.

In making my maiden speech, I should like to say how saddened I was that the by-election responsible for my appearance in the House was occasioned by the tragic death of Bob McTaggart, a man who was not simply a good and trusted comrade; he was a personal friend. Never the sort of man to seek the limelight on his own behalf, Bob was an extremely popular and greatly respected Member of Parliament for Glasgow, Central, a reputation that was earned by his unstinting efforts on behalf of his constituents.

Since my introduction to the House two weeks ago, I have been moved by the large number of hon. Members, from all sides, who have made it clear that they held Bob McTaggart in similar respect. In his maiden speech to the House in July 1980, Bob McTaggart said of his predecessor:

> "If I can serve the people of Glasgow, Central as well as he did, I shall be satisfied."—[*Official Report*, 10 July 1980; Vol. 988, c. 799.]

Today I can pay no greater respect to the memory of Bob McTaggart than to say unhesitatingly that I echo those words.

To represent Glasgow, Central is a responsibility that I take on with considerable pride, aware as I am of the great traditions of the constituency, in its varying forms, throughout this century. Today it is genuinely the most multiracial, multi-religious and therefore multicultural of all Scottish constituencies, from the influx of the Irish—dating back some 150 years and continuing to this day —through the establishment of a considerable Jewish

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presence around the turn of the century, to the large and vibrant Asian communities of today. The social and cultural mix of the constituency is one which I very much welcome, enriching as it does not just the constituency but the city of Glasgow as a whole.

Although the manufacturing industry for which the city was once renowned is now almost non-existent within the constituency—it is, indeed, a sign of the times that the two largest employers within its boundaries are the National Health Service and Glasgow district council—none the less I am pleased to say that its political traditions have remained largely intact, for it was in 1906 that the constituency of Blackfriars returned George Barnes as the first ever Scottish Labour Member of Parliament. In 1922, as the chest of working-class Scotland swelled with pride at the return of 30 Labour Members of Parliament—names which are quite rightly revered to this day—two represented constituencies which now form part of Glasgow, Central: George Buchanan in Gorbals and, most notable of all, Jimmy Maxton in Bridgeton.

The fact that the then Glasgow, Central constituency returned, on the same day, one Andrew Bonar Law, who just happened to be the Prime Minister, might also be worthy of some note, although my hon. Friends will doubtless thank me for not dwelling on that particular chapter of the constituency's heritage. A rich heritage, none the less, it remains—the heritage of the men who earned the accolade of the Red Clydesiders and who fought to relieve poverty and to improve the living conditions of the thousands who were condemned in those inter-war years—as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) said some moments ago—to lives of misery and hopelessness. There could be no more graphic illustration of the density of housing which existed at that time and the conditions that inevitably resulted from it than the fact that the area which today forms one constituency, the one which I represent, contained no fewer than four constituencies in 1922.

From their analysis of the kind of society which produced such conditions, the Red Clydesiders argued passionately for a programme of Socialist reforms—notably the establishment of a Scottish Parliament, within the United Kingdom, which they believed was necessary to ensure that Scots had the ability to decide on matters which were, and are, of direct concern to them.

These principles and aims have a resonance almost 70 years on because, sadly, the levels of unemployment faced and fought by the Red Clydesiders between the wars, and subsequently by their immediate successors such as John Rankin and James Carmichael in the post-war period—whose Socialism may have differed in style and emphasis, although not in intensity—find modern-day parallels which are all too familiar. The city of Glasgow is in many ways miles better, but it still suffers the blight of some of the worst levels of unemployment in Britain today.

As an example, Glasgow, Central currently has the eighth highest unemployment level of any constituency, with an official unemployment rate of 20 per cent. That figure, of course, ignores the various attempts by the Government over the past 10 years to massage, and therefore to distort, the unemployment statistics. The real figure in Glasgow, Central is nearly 30 per cent., but even on the basis of the official figure it still represents a major social problem for many of my constituents.

The problem, however, is wider. The seven parliamentary constituencies which lie high or low, depending on one's perception of such things, in the unemployment league table, are all found—not unexpectedly—in major industrial cities. Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle each contribute one apiece, but, sadly, the remaining three are all Glasgow constituencies. Thus, the city holds the unenviable record of four of the eight highest unemployment levels in the constituencies represented in this House.

That is the scale of the problem. Much of it, not least in Glasgow, Central, is, sadly, borne by young people under the age of 25. In five out of the six wards in the constituency, youth unemployment exceeds 28 per cent. In the Calton ward, it stands at the horrendous level of 45 per cent. I urge hon. Members on all sides of the House to consider that figure and its implications for a few moments.

During the recent by-election campaign, I had occasion to quote that figure. It was challenged by no less a gentleman than the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind). Ultimately, he was obliged to accept its accuracy, which, when one thinks about it, is not surprising, since the figure had been drawn from those supplied by his own Department and the Department of Employment. Yet, as if that was not bad enough, even that figure of 45 per cent. is an understatement of the problem, because in September 1988 the Government withdrew the payment of benefit from youngsters who were unemployed and did not have a YTS place. Since then, thousands of 16 and 17-year-olds have disappeared from the unemployment count.

At that time, the Government guaranteed a YTS place to every young person. It has proved to be the empty promise that many on this side of the House recognised that inevitably it would be. The most recent statistics for the Southside and Bridgeton careers offices, covering the Glasgow, Central constituency, show that 476 16 and 17-year-olds registered for work, yet only 107 YTS places were available. That was a shortfall of 369 places, yet unless these youngsters can show what is euphemistically termed "severe hardship", they will receive no income support whatsoever.

That is the scale of the problem in Glasgow, Central. It is a scandal, and I shall do everything I can, as the Member of Parliament for that constituency, to alleviate it. However, the scope for doing so is limited by a Government whose policies are now producing a school-leaving generation that is largely untrained and unskilled and that is increasingly even without homes and the economic means with which to build their lives. That is a tragic waste of human potential, quite apart from the fact that one of the most obvious methods of combating unemployment—one does not, surely, need to be a Socialist to appreciate it, although you are, Madam Deputy Speaker, a Socialist—is by training and retraining people, by matching skills to needs and by offering every young person what should surely be a basic right—the opportunity of education to the limit of his or her potential.

However, the Government's response has been to cut public expenditure. Those cuts have greatly reduced young

people's chances of getting the education and training that they need. This is certainly not a recent phenomenon in respect of the present party which forms the Government.

The following quotation will, I hope, serve to illustrate my point:

"To ask . . . the Secretary for Scotland, if he will make arrangements for the continued education and training of unemployed boys and girls of 14 to 18 years of age, under the auspices of education authorities in conjunction with the juvenile advisory committees of the Labour Exchanges?"—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1922; Vol. 159, c. 2574.]

Those words formed a question in this House on 12 December 1922 from James Maxton, then the Member of Parliament for the Bridgeton constituency. It is a matter of record that he failed to get a response to his question, although, typically, that did not deflect him from his course of vigorously pursuing that and many other matters on behalf of his constituents. Today's generation of young people in Bridgeton also want an answer on the provision of adequate education and training, as they do on so many other matters. In 1989, as in 1922, they will get no answer, at least not from the current Government, that will materially change the opportunities available to them for the better.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) so eloquently outlined when he opened the debate, our party does have answers for young people. We shall provide real training, without compulsion, for real jobs at real rates of pay. The day is now approaching when that will become reality.

Many people walk with more than hope in their hearts following the unequivocal message delivered throughout the country to the Government on 15 June. Those results did not begin a trend: they confirmed a trend, and a momentum which will increase in pace until its culmination in the return of a Labour Government. That in turn will lead to the establishment of a Scottish Parliament, which the Red Clydesiders demanded 60 years ago and the people of Glasgow, Central demanded three weeks ago. I eagerly take up the challenge of working with my right hon. and hon. Friends to turn that demand into reality.

6 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this brief debate on training and to congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Mr. Watson) on his forthright and sincere maiden speech and on his clear and demonstrated interest in his constituents. I and all right hon. and hon. Members share his expressed feelings about the sad death of Robert McTaggart, the Member for Glasgow, Central for the past nine years. The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that my maiden speech was in the month of July and was on training. I am therefore delighted that he has chosen that subject for his maiden speech, and it gives me great pleasure to congratulate him.

Employment and training are linked. Good training must lead to better employment prospects for people of all ages. In the Norwich travel-to-work area, unemployment fell by 35 per cent. in the past year. Nationally, with the highest-ever number of people in work, with 2 million extra real jobs since 1983 and with 700,000 vacancies, the success of Government policy speaks for itself.

Opposition Members certainly have a hard job if they are to convince the House and the country that they have the right answers on training. I well recall before the 1979 general election their limited and feeble efforts in youth training. I remember the youth opportunities programme. I remember hearing tale after tale of the nonsense that was happening, which would pale into insignificance any roll call that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) could produce. That feeble effort contrasts with the success and the expansion of the Conservative Government's youth training scheme. More than 23 million young people have benefited from that scheme; the Government are spending or investing £1 billion a year, and the number of young people with recognised qualifications is rising. That is all good news and is a tribute to the Government's efforts, particularly in youth training.

The number of young people entering the labour market is declining. We have already heard about the 25 per cent. reduction in school leavers between 1988 and 1993. There are already vacancies in the youth training scheme. At the same time, the Government have to address the problem of skill shortages in every part of the country, including Norwich. Nationally, there are increasing difficulties in attracting qualified technicians. A recent survey shows that some 22 per cent. of firms expect skill shortages to limit their output in the 1990s. We have heard today about the importance of training and competitiveness in our approach to 1992 and beyond. According to the survey, there are also problems with the training of managers, professionals and craftsmen.

I shall make particular reference to engineering, an interest that I hold very dear. In the Norfolk area there are only about 250 YTS trainees in engineering. Unlike Opposition Members, I regard employment training as an increasing success, but it is disappointing that in Norfolk, out of about 2,000 adults involved in the scheme, only five are engineers. Yet the talent and enthusiasm for engineering is there. We have successful school-industry links. Recently, I attended presentations by young engineers, and there is no question that there is enthusiasm for engineering and engineering training, if only we can make a better effort to move away from the present unsatisfactory position.

It is time that right hon. and hon. Members and people throughout the country stopped talking about engineering having a bad image. We have to turn that around and talk about engineering, engineers and young engineers having an exciting future and a good image. That is closer to reality today and is one way in which we can improve young people's prospects and manufacturing industry.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House recognise that we are not training all the people we need. I agree with my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench that a modern training system must be employer-led, because employers are best placed to judge skill needs. It is clear from my own experience and observation that too much training in industry is still short-term, and too often no senior line managers involve themselves closely enough in training. The message shared by hon. Members on both sides of the House is that industry and business leaders must get their act together, spend more on training, put more enthusiasm into training and consider it a good long-term investment, because their record is not good enough. I understand that that view is shared generally throughout the country and is not simply put forward by one political party.

Employers must not place too much reliance on state-run schemes. I have already mentioned the

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undoubted success of the youth training scheme and employment training, in spite of the nonsense that we have heard this afternoon from Opposition Members. The new training and enterprise councils, which have been mentioned today, show the Government's faith in local employers helping to run the schemes and to raise the importance of training locally.

The Government have produced two White Papers recently, one of which considers the future of the industrial training boards. I echo the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) about the need to raise the standard and quality of training to the level of our competitors overseas. That need has been made more urgent by the rapid approach of 1992. The engineering industry training board has already taken steps to meet that new challenge. I know that it is confident that the board can become self-supporting by the financial year 1991-92. According to the chairman, Mr. Astley Whittall;

"the industry will no longer pay a compulsory levy, and therefore will be able to take us or leave us—I intend to make sure our products and services are so good that they will be queuing at the door".

Returning to the role of employers, particularly those in Norwich, I recently chaired a meeting at Laurence Scott Electromotors in Norwich to launch a local initiative to overcome critical skills shortages and the problem of poaching between one firm with skills shortages and another. That problem has become worse in the past few months and years. Local newspapers in Norwich have described it as a "manpower time bomb." That problem must be addressed.

The intention of the group in Norwich is to bring together employers to develop a common training strategy, to identify present and future skill needs and to increase the size of the pool of skilled people available in the area. It is hoped that the Government's new business growth training scheme, which I regard as an excellent initiative, will be involved in and used as part of that strategy.

The inadequacy of our training arrangements is not a new problem. Over the years, unfavourable comparisons have been made with our continental competitors. The problem has been discussed for decades or even centuries. It is a continuing problem, which now has an increasingly European dimension. Will my right hon. Friend the Minister of State confirm that the Government have secured large amounts of money from the European social and regional funds to spend on training? If they have, that is good, because it has helped with certain youth training schemes, particularly in deprived areas. We must welcome any development in Europe that will improve training and access to it. I hope that my right hon. Friend will say a little more about that aspect of training and co-operation.

In the history of training—I am now thinking of the opening remarks of the hon. Member of Oldham, West —Labour Governments have failed miserably. According to the Labour party's glossy new policy document, it is bent on repeating old mistakes. Opposition divisions about employment training have already been effectively disposed of in this debate. The Labour party has done the unemployed a disservice by the way that it has set about attacking a particularly good scheme.

The Opposition's attitude to the youth training scheme has been equally negative. It is equally well known, so I do not need to set it out in detail.

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend said that the Labour party had done a disservice to the unemployed. He may not have been aware of it, but he was echoing the words used by Mr. Bill Jordan of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, who criticised the Labour party's attitude to employment training.

Mr. Thompson: I welcome and agree with that intervention. If time permitted, I could quote many other Opposition politicians who are unhappy about the Labour party's training policy. I share the surprise expressed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that it should have chosen this subject for debate.

The Labour party's policy document proposes quangos, extra bureaucracy and more centralisation, not to mention subservience to the trade union movement, which exposes its policies as hollow and shallow.

The Labour party's motion is wrong-headed, reactionary and positively prehistoric. I shall be delighted to support the Government's amendment, which shows the way forward for training to help our young people and people at all stages in their careers.

6.13 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I join the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) in expressing concern about training in the engineering industry. It is important that an adequate number of able people are attracted into the industry and that standards are maintained. I am sure that the Government will bear that in mind when considering the future of training in the industry following the ending of the statutory levy boards.

I also join the hon. Member for Norwich, North in congratulating the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) on his maiden speech and the tribute that he paid his predecessor, Bob McTaggart, who was much liked and respected by hon. Members.

I agree with the hon. Member of Glasgow, Central that one does not have to be a Socialist to tackle unemployment through training and retraining. One must, however, be a Socialist to follow in the tradition of the Red Clydesiders. If the voters of Glasgow, Central were looking for a worthy inheritor of that tradition, judging from the speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central they have found one.

I do not wish to take up too much time as other hon. Members wish to speak. I shall therefore try to confine my remarks to one or two points. No matter what the Secretary of State said, I am sure that the response to employment training has not lived up to Government expectations. It would have been more helpful if other Opposition parties and local authorities had tried to make the scheme works despite its warts. Nevertheless, it cannot be recognised as the best possible training scheme available for unemployed adults.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) mentioned the difficulties with employment training experienced by married women. The Minister of State will know that I have made representations to him about the problem in my constituency of the wives of men who spend much of the week at sea not qualifying for the child care allowance that has been made available to single-parent

families. That is unnecessary discrimination. It is all very well for the Minister to suggest creche facilities and the use of distance-learning materials, which I do not dispute might be worthy, but they are less than adequate compared with the proper support provided by the child care allowance. The cost involved is probably minimal compared with the benefit that it would offer, bearing in mind the changing shape of the labour market and the fact that more women will have to be attracted into work.

We should be trying to improve the quality of training. Hon. Members have given examples of schemes operated in other countries. In Sweden, which has a high-quality training programme, redundancy is regarded not as a tragedy but as a challenge and an opportunity. Rather than spending £5,000 per annum per place, Sweden spends almost £13,000. People who have been trained and retrained in the latest techniques and shown how to use the most up-to-date technological skills become a valuable asset when they return to the labour market. Not only do we have the tragedy of unemployment, but we are failing to capitalise on what could be a good and useful resource for Britain.

It is impossible to generalise about the youth training scheme. At the outset, it could have been argued that it was a makeshift method of removing young people from the unemployment statistics, but it cannot be denied that, in many places where efforts have been made to make the scheme work, it has done so. I suspect that its effectiveness is patchy, and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central rightly said that the promise of places for all has not been fulfilled. Figures from Strathclyde regional council suggest that in May this year there was a shortage of almost 1,400 places.

There has been misunderstanding or a lack of imagination from the centre about the scheme. Within a local authority area, a place may be available on a scheme, but the distance that has to be travelled to take it up may be vast indeed. Although in theory places are available for young people, often in practice they are not.

The amendment standing in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and others, which has not been selected, highlights the need to place greater emphasis on the educational component of training. It is agreed among hon. Members and industry that there is a lack of some important skills. I urge the Government to take account of the fact that in an advanced industrial society there will be fewer jobs for 16-year-olds in the basic service industries. Job growth will occur in the professional, scientific and technological occupations, which will obviously require higher educational attainment. Only 32 per cent. of young people in Britain carry on full-time education to the age of 18 compared with 95 per cent. in Japan and 72 per cent. in the United States. We must encourage greater participation in full-time education.

The importance of education must be recognised, which means that there must be a well-resourced education service, not an approach which puts teachers in the category of second-class citizens. We should think about compulsory day release schemes. I have been informed, although I have not checked, that the Education Act 1944 included provisions for part-time education and training for people up to the age of 18, to be implemented as soon as conditions permitted. It is now 45 years later and that must be done. I hope that the Government will seriously consider providing for compulsory release from work for training, as many young people are not given any training at all.

Over the years, there have been a series of training organisations and a plethora of initials and now we have the TECs, the training and enterprise councils. I welcome the idea that the private sector should take a greater interest and be more involved in training. Over the years, part of the difficulty has been caused by the lack of such interest and involvement. The Government admit in the White Paper "Scottish Enterprise":

> "Efforts to date to persuade the private sector to take greater interest in and responsibility for training have had disappointing results. Far too many firms take little interest in assessing and training for their own future needs, assuming that supply will always be there to meet demand."

But the Government have gone wrong by putting all their eggs into one basket. As they admit, the private sector has not been at the forefront in meeting training needs.

Will people of calibre be found in all parts of the country? In paragraph 5.1 of "Scottish Enterprise" the Government admit that the concept of locally led training

> "stands or falls on the willingness of people of calibre to respond to this exciting challenge."

We are afraid that many people of calibre will be so busy running their own successful enterprises that they will not have the time to lead training initiatives. There may be a patchy response and delivery of first-class training throughout the country may not be guaranteed.

It is regrettable that United Kingdom business spends only 0·15 per cent. of its turnover on training, compared with between 1 and 2 per cent. for most of our major industrial competitors. I ask the Government to consider the possibility of local authorities being more involved and to look towards a remittable training tax based on turnover. If a company showed through an auditor's certificate that it was genuinely spending money on training, that money could be remitted to it. I regret the element of compulsion, but only in that way can we guarantee that training is taken seriously.

Training and retraining are important to tap the skills of the unemployed and to allow many of those who are employed to learn new skills and adapt to new technologies so that the United Kingdom is geared to the technological age.

6.23 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Much has been said about the differences between this country and our major competitors, primarily in Europe. Those differences have been emphasised in terms of expenditure, but I suggest that expenditure is the secondary item and that the primary factor is the difference in attitudes. If attitudes towards training and the culture of training are right, expenditure and investment will surely follow.

Over the years, the attitudes of employers and employees in this country have differed from the attitudes in the countries of our competitors. British employers have tended to see training as a cost rather than the investment that it is. To a certain extent, that has been spurred on by the City demanding short-term returns on investment rather than long-term returns.

The attitudes of British employees have differed from the attitudes in Germany, Sweden and other western countries. There has been a tendency here to demand a high wage on leaving school, probably at the expense of training and almost certainly at the expense of

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advancement in years to come. There has been a belief in once-for-all training in the first few years after leaving school, in the expectation that it will lead to a trade for life, but that approach has failed to recognise that advancing technology—to which the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) referred—means that people will have to change their jobs repeatedly because of the rapid pace of our economic growth.

Trade unions have tried to protect jobs in outdated skills, without grasping the need for employees to change their skills, often several times in mid-life. That attitude is exemplified in the Opposition's motion. They have concentrated on the 16 to 19-year-olds and have not referred to training throughout the working life, the most critical part of all. How are we to change attitudes?

The Labour party went into the last general election threatening a payroll tax of 1 per cent. to pay for training. That amount has now been reduced to 0·5 per cent., but we are left with the fundamental principle of Socialism, that the state can spend better than individual businesses. This is an extension of the levy system which the Labour party has espoused. If the levy system is so wonderful that the Labour party opposes the Government's proposal to remove statutory training boards, why are there skill shortages? Perhaps this policy is founded on the policy and philosophy of Mr. Scargill, who believes that the only reason Socialism has not worked is that we have not had enough of it, so the more levies we have, the more it will work.

The levy system today, whatever function it has served in the past, is out of date and irrelevant to the needs of industry and the range of training that is required for the ever-increasing variety of businesses in Britain. The abolition of a number of training boards in the past few years has spawned many private training organisations, often co-operative ventures, with many employers joining to provide for their training needs. They can respond quickly, have a common feature in that they are much closer to the businesses for which they work and can meet their clients' needs as and when required.

The investment picture has been changing rapidly. In 1984, research by the Manpower Services Commission showed that there had been an 11 per cent. increase in training activity by businesses over the preceding five years. We do not have an exact comparison in the succeeding five years, but the evidence is that that relatively low increase has been well surpassed.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I agree with my hon. Friend about statutory levies as they apply to most industries, but the construction industry is characterised by many small firms throughout Britain. Surely, without the construction industry training board, which would not survive without a statutory levy, those firms would not have the training and safety provisions that are so badly needed. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is imperative that we keep some statutory levy for the construction industry?

Mr. Paice: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that subject: he has put his finger on the one exception. I accept that, contrary to my fundamental beliefs, activity in the construction industry is so different from activity in other industries that we must retain the levy.

According to the labour force survey, the number of employees receiving training has increased by nearly 1 million during the past five years. Much of the changing attitude we have already seen has come as a result of the youth training scheme. It has encouraged businesses to become involved in training. Many businesses that have never had anything to do with training before have taken on YTS trainees, for whatever reason, and from that, they have developed an involvement with and activity in training, which has spread throughout the business.

I have a small criticism of the YTS, which is that the Manpower Services Commission did not act vigorously or ruthlessly enough on the approved training organisation status in weeding out those organisations that were not delivering the expected quality. However, the important point is that we have seen industry becoming more involved. That is the principle behind the training and enterprise councils, which I wholly support. They encourage industrial involvement and encourage business to ensure that the YTS and employment training programmes are delivered locally, based on local needs.

It is necessary, of course, to retain a national framework of standards. The use of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications will be of great value in that. We must recognise that modern training techniques can substantially reduce training time; that is one reason why it is no use pining after the old apprenticeship scheme. Much of that was time serving. It is true that the apprentices learned skills, but modern training technology means that training schemes do not need to run for as many years as they did for the old apprenticeships.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone). Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Paice: No, because I know that another Labour Member wishes to speak in the debate.

We must recognise that people still think of training identification and appraisal of a form of criticism of standards. They are not. It is interesting that, despite the furore a few years ago in the teaching profession about the suggestion of appraisal, the few authorities that carry out teacher appraisal have met a wonderful response from the teachers who have been through it. They now recognise that it is a constructive approach to human development, rather than a form of back-door criticism of what they are doing.

If we are to move towards a greater emphasis on training from business, we must first ensure that business from the top understands its involvement. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) mentioned the need for management to become more involved. I remember that 10 years ago, when I was first appointed as training officer to my then company, we embarked on a programme of staff training. The first person who went on a training course was the managing director, and he was followed by the divisional managers. We went down the structure from there. The managers set the example to the rest of the staff that training should go right through the organisation.

One aspect that still causes great concern is the poaching by one employer of another's employee in whose training the original employer has invested. We must consider ways to address that problem, because it is the one obstacle that discourages business from investing in

training. The answer is clear: we must look at property rights and consider whether employees could be asked to sign a contract of commitment of service.

It is commonplace in the United States that employees undergoing a programme of training agree to a period of service as an employee of the company making that investment. That is not wholly unknown in this country. The armed services sponsor people through university and require a certain service afterwards. In football, we hear of massive sums being paid to buy off contracts made for a certain period of employment. There must be fallbacks, of course, so that people can extricate themselves from such contracts for valid reasons, but we must consider ways of dealing with the problem.

There have been a few cases in this country in which people have tried to deal with the problem. In a major court case, Strathclyde regional council—which is not exactly a hotbed of macho Tory management—brought a case against Neil and the court decided that a contract specifying that training costs could be repaid if the employee resigned before completing a minimum period of service was enforceable. That sets the scene, and I wish that we could do far more. It may mean that we must do more to clarify the law in that respect.

The Government have clearly set out a policy throughout the economy over the years of setting business free from Government involvement. That policy has demonstrated its success clearly in consistent massive growth rates and in reductions in unemployment. The evidence is that business is now rightly turning its attention to training. The Government's responsibility is to nurture, stimulate and encourage industry to claw back the lost ground, rather than to interpose themselves between industry and training and to damage what is already happening. We must recognise that the Government's role is to work behind the scenes, rather than to intervene.

That is the fundamental difference between the policies, which I support, of the Conservative party and this Government, and the policies of the Labour party. Business should make decisions about training; it is not a matter for Government. The Government should supplement what business does, and not supplant it, as is proposed by the Opposition.

6.35 pm

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) on his superb maiden speech, which he delivered authoritatively. He replaces me as the newest Member of the House of Commons.

There is one aspect of training that has not been covered adequately this afternoon, although it was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham). My concern is about the deplorable record of accidents, serious injuries and deaths which has increased dramatically during the reign of the present Government and the previous two. The House should recognise that there is an inextricable link between the quality of training and the industry's safety record. Training is the key not only to our economic future, but to ensuring that we can bring down the tragic incidence of death and destruction in industry, which is to the shame of the Government and which continues to be appalling, especially in the construction industry, to which the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West referred. We must tackle that problem and we can do so only through training.

The Government have a lamentable record on training. I do not know how they can turn round now and draw attention to skills shortages and the so-called "revolution" in training to deal with them. The "revolution" is a continuation of the Government's 10-year-old free market philosophy, which is essentially for them to wash their hands of responsibility and to pass it on to local organisations dominated by employers. Yet employers themselves recognise that they need state assistance and state guidance, which employers enjoy in every other major competitor country, to provide first-class training. I received first-class training myself as a building craftsman two decades ago, but such training is now sadly lacking.

In the past few years, I have had considerable direct experience of YTS training and have been involved with many thousands of YTS trainees. The quality of training for the majority of them is unacceptable. They simply gain work experience, and not training as such. The fact that our safety record is so bad shows the appalling level of training. Nowhere is that more noticeable and more significant than in the record of accidents among YTS trainees. That is a direct result of the absence of quality training. When the Labour party forms a Government, we will put an end to that. I ask the Minister to draw the attention of his colleagues to the close link between safety and training.

I conclude by relating an appalling example that I encountered as a trainer in this area. A young YTS trainee set out in the winter month of November on a decorating job and began by painting the outside of a building with a highly inflammable substance by which he became covered during the course of his work. When it came to the morning tea-break at 10 o'clock, before going in to the cabin with all the others for his cup of tea and for something to eat, he stopped by the glowing brazier to warm himself. That move was fatal.

The reason why youngsters die and are seriously injured and maimed in industry is that they are not given adequate training. If that boy had been trained properly, the accident would never have happened. It would never have happened to me, because of the training that I received.

6.40 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): This has been an interesting debate. With the possible exception of the Secretary of State, like us all being against sin, we are all very much in favour of training. However, that is where the similarity ends, because Conservative Members have risen only to say how much they are in favour of the Government's approach and of the private sector which, according to them, has achieved such miracles.

Although that is what the Secretary of State told the House, the reality is that the right hon. Gentleman is at odds with the head of his own training agency. When Mr. Roger Dawe, the director general of the Training Agency, addressed a conference on the issue of training, he stated that at every level we were towards the bottom of the training league table, whether in education, youth training, higher level skills training or management. He then pointed out that on the evidence of the statistics on

[Mr. Tony Lloyd]

training in this country, far from catching up with our competitors in western Europe, Japan and the United States, we are falling further and further behind.

Indeed, a Government survey which has yet to be properly published—although its author has managed to get his results on the public record—shows that the level of training in this country is frightening in its lack of intensity. Only one third of private manufacturing companies actively train their employees; less than half the organisations in the private service sector train their employees; yet the much-derided public sector trains at least 60 per cent. of its workers. Incredible though it may seem, 14 per cent. of those who are officially designated as "apprentices" or "long-term trainees" receive no training whatsoever. I repeat that, under this Government's training programme, 14 per cent. of trainees receive no training.

I could go on and on about this country's failure in training matters. Conservative Members have tried to say that the Government's present record compares favourably with that of the last Labour Government. However, let us look at the reality in industry—not back in 1979, but as recently as 1982, when skills shortages were reported as a major constraint on output by as few as 2·5 per cent. of our companies. The CBI recently reported that 20 per cent. of companies now experience severe skills shortages that are sufficiently bad as to prevent output developing, and the Association of British Chambers of Commerce has reported that 49 per cent. of manufacturing companies now experience skills shortages.

I welcomed the speech of the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West, who spoke about the construction industry. At the moment the much-derided construction industry training board is training 30,000 people per year. However, the CITB recognises that it needs to raise that level considerably to 88,000 people a year. It is now predicted that at present rates there will be a shortfall of 1 million construction workers in the next 10 years. That deficit cannot be made up by the private sector, whether through the training and enterprise councils system or any other system. Because we have the CITB and the levy system, we have some chance, but not enough, to make up the skills shortages in that industry.

As Conservative Members know, the Federation of Master Builders is hardly one of the Labour party's traditional supporters. The federation has made it clear that it considers that

> "there is nothing in . . . recent history . . . to warrant the view that the end of the statutory based CITB would lead to the creation of a voluntary training organisation which could yield better or more cost effective training."

The Secretary of State must take that message on board. The right hon. Gentleman has told us about the TEC system—the ideological attempt to remove the Government from all responsibility for what goes on—but it is a blind move towards the so-called "market system". Indeed, the head of the Training Agency has referred to the present system of training as a "mixed pattern".

The Opposition know that the private sector is failing the country. We know that the Secretary of State said that there are now over 25 million people in work, but when one looks at the real rate of investment in training, one sees that it is not the £18 billion that the Secretary of State has claimed: it is about £3·25 billion when wage costs and income support are removed. That represents about £100 per year for every person at a place of work. That is a pathetic indictment of the Government, of what they have done in the past 10 years and of what they are doing now.

The Secretary of State also said that the TEC system was popular with the private sector, but it is not. I refer him to the views of the Builders Merchants Federation —a small part of the private sector—which is deeply suspicious of the TEC system because it feels that it is being frozen out of that system and that its needs for national training are being ignored by the pursuit of long-distance remote-controlled training and by the Government's avoidance of responsibility.

The Secretary of State recently attended a conference organised by the Institute of Personnel Management and the British Association of Commercial and Industrial Education. The head of the Training Agency was also present. Having been severely criticised for the inadequacies of the TEC system, the head of the Training Agency lamely remarked:

> "You are saying: don't trust the employers—don't trust TECs, please will the Government make it compulsory to train and make it compulsory for employers not to take anyone on until they are 18: that's a surprising message from an employer gathering."

The Secretary of State must recognise that the employers are saying that the TEC system does not work; that it will not work and that it cannot provide the training. The private sector will fail us once again, as it has in the past——

Mr. Tracey *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: No, I shall not give way, because I do not have the time.

I turn now to the employment training system, which the Secretary of State describes as a success. However, the right hon. Gentleman did not go on to say that 60 per cent. of those who are recommended to go on employment training refuse to do so. They refuse to have anything to do with employment training. The Secretary of State may deny that, but those are the Government's own figures. Those are the figures in an "in confidence" Department of Employment document that I am holding now. Indeed, those figures were given in confidence because the Secretary of State does not want them known by the public.

Employment training is failing six out of 10 people and they are not prepared—*[Interruption.]* Well, I shall quote the figures to the Secretary of State. Referrals from the employment service to the Training Agency, cumulative to April this year, numbered 685,100. However, only 274,900 began as trainees. Therefore, less than 40 per cent. of those who were referred by the employment service made it on to an ET scheme, because those who realise what employment training is all about are simply rejecting it.

I shall give the Secretary of State some other figures. The Building Manufacturers Federation, which is not untypical of many of the would-be providers of ET, established what is regarded as a high-quality employment training scheme. We could debate the merits of employment training at greater length if we had more time, but in this case the employers claimed that they had a high-quality scheme, yet they attracted only one trainee for the 400 places that were available. That federation has told me that there are two reasons why it has only one trainee. The first is the derisory pay available to trainees on

employment training schemes. The second reason is that even on this high-quality scheme, the lousy image of employment training across the nation is such that any self-respecting unemployed person does not want to know about it.

In its magazine "Personnel Management", the Institute of Personnel Management has commented:

"The problem, where there is one, is that ET was born of a curious compromise between training and make-work".

That is the reality of employment training.

I turn now to one particular scheme, to the disastrous failure of the Council for Social Aid in Greater Manchester, which affected my constituents. The scheme left debts of £1 million. I hope that the Minister will reply to my points later, but the House should know that that scheme was failing well before Christmas. In November of last year that scheme was falsifying names on one of its projects in Openshaw and I am led to believe that the Training Agency was aware of it. If the Minister was not aware of it, his departmental officials, through the Training Agency, were. The Minister has a direct responsibility for the fact that there were totally bogus names on the list of trainees. Even the numbers on ET are open to fiddle in that scheme and, I suggest, more generally.

Representatives of the Training Agency were well aware in the early part of this year that in some parts of the CSA scheme in Manchester, there were no typewriter ribbons for people taking typing courses and there were no toilet rolls for the trainees or the staff. The Training Agency knew about that. Even if the Minister did not know about it, his staff and departmental officials were aware of it. At that level, he has responsibility for what happened.

There was a cosy little conspiracy at quite a high level in the Training Agency—and perhaps in the Department—to cover up what was happening. The ET scheme was not allowed to fail at such an early stage, particularly when it was set up for 2,500 would-be trainees, but never achieved more than 1,000. The scheme failed because, trainees would not make themselves available. It failed because ET is grossly underfunded and it failed because although it was trying in some parts to provide decent quality training, the trainees did not want to know. The scheme failed and left debts of £1 million, of which £400,000 is owed to the Training Agency. There was a cosy little cover-up which amounts to a corrupt conspiracy to protect the Government's propaganda about ET. The scheme could have been rescued at an early stage in the interests of trainees and the staff. However, the Government were not prepared to allow it to fail at such an early stage.

When the scheme failed and the Training Agency pulled the plug, the decision was not taken by the Training Agency: it was referred to Whitehall. The decision was taken in Whitehall because the Training Agency knew that it had something on its hands which was too big for it to take a decision on its own.

The ET scheme is failing the nation. However much the Secretary of State huffs and puffs, ET is failing the nation and the unemployed. Like YTS, ET is failing our young people in many areas. The Government have no comprehensive view on training. Until they recognise that the private sector unaided will fail in training, until we have a tripartite relationship between Government, industry and the trade unions, we will not have the training which will give a future to this country—the type of future which our people expect and should expect. Our people will get that future only when there is a change of Government.

6.52 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. John Cope): My first and pleasant duty is to congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) on his maiden speech. Many hon. Members will share his sentiments about our late colleague Bob McTaggart, whose death saddened us all. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Central made it clear that he takes on a great political heritage on Clydeside and he gave the House a clear sign that he will live up to that.

I also congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central on choosing to make his maiden speech in this debate, because it has been an interesting debate on a very important subject. This country lives, in Europe and in the rest of the world, by its skills, and that has long been so. However, the skills required to compete these days change very quickly. It is no longer enough for people to pick up skills on the way and for them to work out the best way to do things. Training is essential, and so is constant retraining. That much is common ground between the Government and the Opposition.

Of course there are skills shortages; that fact reflects in part at least a vigorous and changing economy. However, it is also a challenge for us all. The Government, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment said, are in the middle of a series of radical changes. I believe that YTS has been transformed, particularly since we extended it to two years. It has taken on more young people and has enabled the quality and usefulness of the training to be improved. At present, 386,000 young people are on YTS; historically, that is a very high figure. I can reassure the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central that we also have more than 141,000 YTS places available and we can bring more places forward if we need to do so. Sixty-three per cent. of those who complete YTS training now gain qualifications, and that percentage continues to rise. YTS is also very popular with most of the young people who participate in the scheme, and it has proved very valuable to trainees and employers. I believe that it is a vast improvement on previous schemes.

The youth training scheme has introduced proper structured training into sectors where it hardly existed before and to youngsters who have had no training. We are committed to improving the scheme and to making it more flexible and relevant and to increasing the proportion of young people who obtain qualifications. We are working on that. YTS covers an enormously wide area of training. I am glad to be able to say that a YTS trainee plays football for England, and as from a few days ago—as some hon. Members will be particularly pleased to know—another YTS trainee now plays cricket for Yorkshire. I leave hon. Members to judge which is the more important sporting achievement.

The new funding structure this year provides for greater flexibility and response to particular needs and for a larger proportion of the money to help young people with special needs and those with disabilities. That is very important. I welcome yesterday's CBI report on this general subject,

[Mr. John Cope]

which reinforced the importance of training, particularly for young people. We will, of course, study that report very carefully.

Much of the attention in this debate has been devoted to the Government's employment training programme.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Cope: I have only a few minutes left, so I will not give way.

As far as we know, ET is the most ambitious and largest training programme for unemployed people in the world. It is a massive investment by Government in the future of unemployed people. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, nearly 200,000 people throughout the country now take advantage of ET, and that is a very definite vote of confidence by unemployed people in the programme. It is also the best start for any adult training programme ever launched. That figure of 200,000 is more than three times the number of people who joined the community programme over the same period.

The hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) referred to the so-called drop-out rate. He was really talking about the number of people who say that they are interested in ET compared with those who really start on the programme. That tells us something about unemployed people, as well as something about the way in which the programme is perceived. The employment training programme has received a far better response than any previous programme run by the Government. It is far better than the community programme, JTS and the job clubs. It is producing a better response from unemployed people. That is not surprising, because the programme offers a mix of practical and directed training to participants tailored to meet their individual needs.

Some 18 per cent. of those who start the programme have an identified literacy and numeracy training need; that is one of the special needs which ET fulfils. Particular attention is paid to providing training to meet such needs and about 35,000 people currently receive literacy and numeracy training within ET in some form or another. Twelve per cent. of the new entrants to the programme have long-term health problems or disabilities, which represents a much higher proportion than for any previous adult training programme. Eleven per cent. of people on the employment training programme are from the ethnic minorities and are a significantly higher proportion than for the community programme and higher than the share of ethnic origin groups in total unemployment.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) referred to the numbers of women in employment. Nearly 30 per cent. of all new employment training entrants are women. Again, that is in line with the proportion of unemployed women. The programme is also making a significant impact on inner cities and we are building on that at the moment. It is helping older workers. About 8,500 trainees aged over 50 have benefited from the programme, and nearly half of them were unemployed for more than two years.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State spoke about the training and enterprise councils. I will not re-emphasise their importance.

The Government have increased their spending on training from approximately £450 million a year in 1979 to over £3,000 million this year. Part of that—about £300 million—comes from the European social fund. Our Government's spending on training as a proportion of GDP is now higher than that in France, Germany, America or Japan, but it is much less than employers spend, including the Government as an employer. About £18,000 million was spent by employers in 1986-87, and the amount has undoubtedly gone up since then. Of course, that includes wages; they are a legitimate part of the cost of training.

I have quoted those figures to show the absurdity of the Opposition's idea, which they did not spell out today, that the way to solve the training problem is to impose on employers a special tax of about £1,000 million. Opposition Members believe that that will somehow make a colossal difference. That is an absurd claim, and nobody can take it seriously.

It is extremely significant that neither the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) nor his hon. Friend the hon. Member for Stretford made any but passing references to the Labour party's proposals in its recent document. They not only provide for that new tax but, to a great degree, propose to hand back control to unions. Some union leaders have proved to be strong supporters of training, including employment training and so on, but, at every turn, many others have opposed employment training and YTS. We have seen that in our Department and outside. In general, their record would not give us confidence that that is the right way to proceed.

Training is vital for the country and the individuals within it. It would be wrong to take responsibility for training from those who provide the jobs and use the skills. It is right to share the responsibility with training and enterprise councils, which can and will build on the training efforts of employers and others involved, to the great benefit of Britain. I urge the House to support the amendment.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 192, Noes 275.

Division No. 280] **[7.02 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald

Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis

Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

that this House noting that Employment Training is the largest and fastest growing training programme for adults ever mounted in this country, and noting the success of YTS in equipping young people for jobs or further education, and the record scale of public resources devoted to training, welcomes the Government's achievements in improving the quantity and quality of training in Britain and the major further steps it now proposes to take to meet the training needs of the 1990's.

Immigration and DNA Testing

7.14 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the Government's continued determination to operate laws which are racially discriminatory, as evidenced by their newly amended and consolidated immigration rules and the statement on their attitude towards DNA testing in immigration cases; and condemns the creation and perpetuation of second class citizenship which is the inevitable consequence of such laws.

The motion provides an opportunity for hon. Members on both sides of the House to express their opinions on any aspect of immigration policy. I know that that is the intention of many of my right hon. and hon. Friends. However, I propose to concentrate almost exclusively on one aspect of immigration policy, which is the Government's proposals for the use of DNA testing as a means of establishing parentage.

I choose that one aspect of policy on which to concentrate in this essentially time-limited debate, because it is a new and major aspect of policy, and the proposals for dealing with that new situation, as set out by the Government, will undoubtedly cause hardship and distress to many British families.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): *[Interruption.]* I am a little confused as to why the right hon. Gentleman did not raise this matter, which obviously is dear to his heart, in the immigration rules debate on 20 June or at Question Time on 11 May or on 15 June. Why has he been absent so many times and not raised the matter before?

Mr. Hattersley: I am afraid that there was so much discontent at what appears to have been a wholly irrelevant intervention that I did not hear what the hon. Gentleman said. If he wants to raise that irrelevancy again, I shall listen to him and try to answer him.

Mr. Devlin: I was wondering why the right hon. Gentleman did not raise those points on a number of occasions in the last few weeks, such as on 11 May, 15 June or 20 June, when he was here but said nothing. If the Opposition are going to raise these matters in debate, they should have raised them at other times, too.

Mr. Hattersley: I am glad that I gave the hon. Gentleman the opportunity to make his point, because it enables me to say what I was not going to say, but is worth saying. Most of these matters were discussed in the House at 12.30 am during the week before last. I conveyed my personal view to the Home Secretary in a conversation behind the Chair that the introduction of the new rules, our prayers against them, and his introduction of DNA testing were not suitable subjects to be debated in the middle of the night. I also conveyed to the Home Secretary my view that, had the Prime Minister either sufficient courtesy or sufficient courage, she would have answered my letter and justified the policy on DNA testing. Although I wrote to her three months ago, I have not yet received a reply. It is for such reasons that the Opposition took the proper decision, and this entirely legitimate chance, to debate this matter in our time. If the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) would like me to expand on that theme, I would be happy to do so. *[Interruption.]*

As the hon. Member for Stockton, South would not, I shall say why I want to deal almost exclusively with one aspect of immigration policy. I repeat that the policy proposals on DNA testing, as set out by the Government, will cause hardship and distress to many British families. I want to emphasise that. The men and women who are asking and have asked for the entry of their sons and daughters into this country are British citizens. They are as British as any hon. Member. We are talking not about our attitude towards alien people, but our attitude towards British citizens. They may happen to be Moslems, or brown or black, or have been born outside Britain or be the children of men and women born outside Britain, but they are British citizens. It is citizens in that category against whom the Government are operating.

The new proposals were set out by the Home Secretary in a written answer rather than in a proper statement to the House and, if I can command the attention of the hon. Member for Stockton, South, that is another reason for this debate today. Those crucial proposals affecting civil liberties were not given in a proper announcement to the House, but by way of an arranged written answer to one of the Home Secretary's cronies on the Conservative Back Benches.

My second reason for concentrating on DNA testing is to illustrate the truth behind the Government immigration policies. When DNA testing is examined, all the talk of matching firmness with fairness is revealed as simple humbug. The Government's immigration policy is not based on any set of consistent and defensible principles. It is not based on any effective criteria against which legitimate rights can be measured.

Too often we describe visitors as immigrants when they are no such thing. Too often they are treated as immigrants who want to settle here when all they want to do is to spend a few weeks with their family and friends. The Government's policy towards those visitors and to immigrants is based on the simple principle of keeping the numbers down to an absolute minimum—at least, keeping numbers down to an absolute minium when those visitors come from Africa, the Caribbean or the Indian sub-continent. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".] I hear Conservative Members below the Gangway saying, "Hear, hear".

There was a time in the House when even the Tory party would have been ashamed to espouse such attitudes openly. Perhaps the Secretary of State will take this opportunity to disown such opinion. He may want to take this opportunity to disown some of the speeches made in that late night debate.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): The right hon. Gentleman started his speech, as he normally does, on the basis that the Government are wrong in trying to keep numbers to a minimum. Is he totally convinced that every visitor who comes here is a genuine visitor and that every visitor returns to his home once the time during which he is allowed to remain here has expired?

Mr. Hattersley: Of course I could not be convinced that every visitor is genuine and that every visitor returns to his homeland. What I know as a certainty—it will be confirmed by my hon. Friends who face this problem day by day—is that hundreds of genuine visitors who want to come here for a brief period and who are genuine and honest in their offers to return home at the end of their alloted span are not allowed to come into this country. That is especially true if they come from the Indian sub-continent.

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): Would my right hon. Friend care to contemplate that the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) supported the right to citizenship of Zola Budd? She came here and jumped every queue. She gave an undertaking to remain here permanently, but she has now returned to South Africa. She remains a British citizen and, as far as I can judge from the latest Government proposals, she will be entitled to vote at the next general election.

Mr. Hattersley: Yes, my right hon. Friend has highlighted the double standards that are constantly displayed on the Conservative Benches.

The canard about the bogus visitor is easy to express in the House and it is easy for it to be taken up by our worst newspapers. In the past 25 years I have dealt with thousands of visitors who have come to this country for a brief period, before and after the visa system was introduced. In that time I do not believe that the Home Office, the immigration department or the police have had to deal with more than 25 overstayers. If I am in error I trust that the Home Secretary and the Minister of State will prove me wrong by quoting from their records. Most of my experience relates to visitors from the Indian sub-continent and from Pakistan and often those visitors come here for a specific purpose, be it a family party, a wedding or a religious festival. They have every intention of returning home and do so. It does Conservative Members below the Gangway no credit to hiss about overstayers when they cannot provide any proof. They do so because they find it racially satisfactory to continue the rumour.

Mr. John Carlisle: What evidence does the right hon. Gentleman have to prove that such overstaying does not take place? How does he know that all visitors are genuine? Under what system can he absolutely guarantee that such visitors return to their homes?

Mr. Hattersley: What sort of question is that? How do I know that the hon. Gentleman does not cheat on his tax returns? The only way that I know that is because I rely on the authority of Government and on the agencies of Government to abide by the law. How do I know that the hon. Gentleman did not burgle a neighbour on the way here this morning? The only way I know that is because I believe that the Home Office and the agencies of the law operate properly. I know about the integrity of my constituents in exactly the same way as I know about the hon. Gentleman's integrity and, frankly, I would gamble on them with rather more certainty.

Before the hon. Member for Luton, North made his unsubstantiated allegations I said that there was a time in this House when the sort of stuff that we heard a moment ago would have been disowned by a series of Home Secretaries who genuinely believed in a racially equal society. Today the big difference is not in the attitude of the Home Secretary, but in the attitude of the Prime Minister, who colours, dominates and determines such matters.

Yesterday the Prime Minister was asked in the House to justify the new DNA rules. She did not even attempt to justify their objectivity, justice or fairness. She did not even

[Mr. Hattersley]

give the sort of apologia that we shall hear from the Home Secretary shortly. The Prime Minister simply said that the reason why we have the new DNA rules was that she was not prepared to allow any more immigrants into the country. That is, of course, unless they can buy their way in at £150,000 a time. That is one of the principles of fairness and firmness applied to immigration by the Government.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): The right hon. Gentleman has denounced the Prime Minister and Government policy. He says that it is wrong to allow people to buy their way in. India is another country which operates such a system and its high commission told me: "The Indian Government decides each application on its own merits and the applicant's financial position or sponsorship would probably be taken into account." There are plenty of countries across the world that, intelligently, operate a qualitative sieve of the immigrants that they allow in.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman may hold the view that if the Indian Government do it, it is bound to be right, but that is not a principle to which I subscribe. The idea that, because the Indians do it, we should do it as well is a new dictum in British parliamentary democracy. The Indians are wrong in that particular, just as we are.

It is important to consider the effect of the DNA rules and what they show us about our immigration system. The new DNA rules will deny entry—it is not a matter of dispute or doubt—to men and women who applied to come here as children, believing that they had a legal right to do so, but whose legal right was denied. We now know from DNA testing that some applicants—the numbers are uncertain—who had the legal right were denied entry on the wrong evidence as examined by an immigration officer and subsequently by an adjudicator and possibly a tribunal. Under the new DNA rules, although a child had the legitimate right to enter this country and although his right was proved beyond any doubt or disagreement subsequent to it being denied initially, there will be no redress for the wrong done. The Government will not make up in any way for their initial error.

I find it indefensible that children who were prevented from joining their parents in this country by what was at best a mistake and who have undoubtedly been done a grave injustice should not have that wrong righted. It is worth repeating that they would be allowed in if they possessed £150,000. Notwithstanding that, I am sure that, as I predicted during an intervention, the Home Secretary will tell us of his determination to be fair in the application of immigration policy. He will not be surprised that we do not believe him. I hope that he will consider the evidence suggesting the unfairness demonstrated by the new DNA rules.

The new DNA rules also highlight a complaint which the Opposition have made during the past 10 years. Men and women who are entitled to enter this country, even under the present oppressive rules, are often kept out because of the harsh way in which these rules are implemented. The best that can be said about the implementation of the rules, the way in which they are used at ports of entry and the frequent attitude of officers towards them, is that the Government are so anxious to keep one illegal immigrant out of Britain that they exclude a dozen legitimate applicants just to make sure. That is certainly the result of the primary purpose rule, which divides many genuine families by denying husbands the right to enter this country because they cannot answer the negative question.

Those husbands cannot demonstrate beyond any doubt and dubiety that marriage is their only reason for entering this country. I know from my own experience that there are thousands of women in this country who entered into an honourable, honest and lasting marriage who have been denied the support which a Government who talk about the family should provide by allowing their husbands to enter the country.

I saw that, in his egregious way, the Minister, the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) shook his head when I criticised the primary purpose rule. All hon. Members know that, if we had said two years ago that many children had been denied entry into this country even though they were related to their parents as they claimed, he would have reacted in just the same way. He would have said that there was no evidence to support that claim, that every genuine child was allowed in, and that every son and daughter whose father and mother were genuinely and properly resident here were allowed in. The Government have been proved wrong over that, and I have no doubt that they are equally wrong in the way that they apply the primary purpose rule and separate legitimate husbands and wives who are party to an honest and honourable marriage.

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from the DNA rules is that the Government cannot be trusted to apply policies on ministerial discretion. When I met the Home Secretary and others to discuss this subject last week, he said that he believed that the best possible protection for the DNA-proven son or daughter whose relationship was once denied, but which had now been incontrovertibly proved, was to allow the Home Secretary discretion to use the compassion which we must trust him to possess. I do not accept that, because I do not believe that the Home Secretary will act with objectivity and compassion, or do anything when presented with individual cases other than use all his power to prevent the individual who has previously been excluded from entering this country.

I shall tell him the reasons for my judgment about his future conduct. I have seen, as have many hon. Members, the Home Office's official working document which constitutes the beginnings of the rules which officers of the Department are to use and apply. It talks about the compassionate entry of, for example, the young man of 20 who should have been allowed in three years ago when he was 17, was told that he was not the son of his father and has subsequently been proved to be the son of his father. When deciding whether he should be allowed into this country, even though he is above the age of 18, the immigration services have been instructed to implement the following rule outlined in the Government-produced document:

> "It will be crucial to hold this line to ensure the concession remains the exception rather than the rule."

The discretion based on the compassionate agreement that a man or woman should enter is to be calculated by the arithmetic of immigration. What happens if a majority of the cases involving men and women who should have been let in years ago, were turned down but have now proved the legitimacy of their application, come to him

and say, "My father in Britain is frail and needs attention," or, "My mother in Britain is sick and on her own," or, "I am ill and need the help of my parents now living in Britain"? According to his own rules, if a majority of cases are like that, the Secretary of State will say, "Don't worry me about compassion. My rule is that it is crucial to hold the line to ensure that concession remains the exception rather than the norm." To tell us that the rules will be implemented with fairness as well as firmness makes a mockery of the English language and does nothing for the Home Secretary's reputation.

The DNA issue illustrates another point which I have already mentioned: the fallibility of the present procedures for determining the legitimacy of an immigrant's claim that he or she has the right to entry. We have always known that applications for entry which are legitimate under the present rules are turned down at the point of entry. We have always known that the examination of appeals by adjudicators was no guarantee of justice. We have known of those two points because the attitude of port officials when examining an application is unavoidably influenced by the climate created by the Government who employ them. If the officials think that the Home Secretary expects them to be tough or if, having read what is said in the House of Commons, they think that the Home Secretary has neither the inclination nor the courage to repudiate some of the statements made by Conservative Back Benchers, those officials will believe it their duty to use the rules to keep people out rather than let them in.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The right hon. Gentleman talked about arithmetic a few moments ago, and referred to the Prime Minister's reply the other day and an immigration level of 40,000 or 50,000. If the Labour party was in government and had repealed the legislation as it says it would, what would the level of immigration be then? Would it not be three or four times as high?

Mr. Hattersley: I urge the hon. Gentleman to focus on the important point, which is to let in people who deserve to be let in and not those who do not so deserve. For example, I think that under the next Labour Government, more husbands will be allowed in and fewer men and women will be allowed to buy their way in at £150,000 a time. One rule cancels out another. Does the Home Secretary agree with the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) if he is saying that we should establish a number and not worry about the merits or care whether those seeking entry are genuine husbands or dependent relatives? That is one sort of immigration policy, but until the Prime Minister gave her answer on Tuesday it was a policy which not even this Government had said they operated.

The Government at least pretend that they do not add up the numbers, but let people in according to the individual merits of the case. It so happens that the Prime Minister blew the gaff last Tuesday. The hon. Gentleman may be pleased about that. Frankly, I am ashamed to be a citizen of a country in which the Prime Minister holds such standards.

The DNA tests demonstrate that the Government and their agencies made mistakes, partly because of the pressure placed on individuals by the Government's attitude and partly because of the adjudicators. The more I read of adjudicators' determinations on immigration cases, the more worried I become, not about immigration, but about adjudicators' standards and forensic abilities. Having made the mistakes, partly because of the atmosphere created, the Government—in the judgment of every reasonable man and woman—have an obligation to provide some redress to those men and women who were wrongly excluded two or three years ago and who should now be allowed in. It is shameful of the Home Secretary to defend keeping out men and women who should once have been allowed in—we can demonstrate that—by inventing retrospectively a new rule about the entry of sons and daughters.

When I saw the Home Secretary last week he told me that the rule governing the entry of sons and daughters was always related to their dependency status. That rule has never been written down anywhere in the immigration regulations and I had never heard it expressed until the Home Secretary invented it to defend what he is doing. Until the DNA testing procedure showed that sons and daughters who should have been allowed in were not, the fact of being a son or daughter of a British citizen and under the qualifying age of 18 automatically meant that a person had a right to enter. Such people had the automatic right when they were turned down, so it is wholly unacceptable in a civilised society that the Home Secretary should say that they may have been dependent at the time of refusal but that they are not now, so the Home Office does not intend to make up for the mistake that it made, thereby compensating them for their legitimate grievance.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I want to understand what the right hon. Gentleman is saying. If someone has been excluded—wrongly, as it now seems—but has established a family in his own country, is the right hon. Gentleman suggesting that he should be allowed to settle permanently in Britain with his family, despite having made a life for himself abroad?

Mr. Hattersley: I am. I make no apology for doing so. Governments should be responsible for their mistakes. The hon. and learned Gentleman is hoping to raise the spectre of what is called "paving" in certain circles—that of a man getting in and then bringing his wife and three children—a spectre that some Conservative Members are pleased to welcome. Most of the people who applied to come here did so because they wanted to maintain their links with families in the United Kingdom. Many of them wanted to help elderly parents in their declining years and all whom we have discussed this evening had a legitimate right to enter. The Government cannot deny a person a right which is his in law and then say that, having denied him that right three years ago, they have no obligation to make up for it. The Government are not entitled to say that they may have taken money off a person wrongly but that they do not have to pay it back because that person is well off now.

The Government have made mistakes and they should make up for them now. I have no doubt that if they had made such a mistake in respect of any community other than the Asian community in this country they would have redressed it by themselves. They believe that Asians in general and Bangladeshis in particular can be tyrannised, but they would not do that to anyone else——

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this reveals the hypocrisy of

[Ms. Clare Short]

the Government in relation to the Helsinki Final Act—the right to family unity applies to some families, but, it appears, not to Asians?

Another example of the Government's double standards is this: before DNA testing became available, someone who was over 18 and who later proved that he had been wrongly refused entry was allowed entry provided that he had not formed his own family. The Government are now going back on that because DNA testing would prove that so many wrong decisions had been taken. So even the Government's former practice is being torn up—they are going backwards.

Mr. Hattersley: I share my hon. Friend's contempt for this continual deterioration of standards in the immigration laws of this country. To put it as kindly as I can, year after year the Government have tightened them up in a way that is intended to exclude rather than to examine on merit.

Of course there must be strict controls and a major policy of immigration which prevents a large number of people who want to enter the country from doing so, but the controls must be based on honest and objective rules which can be defended openly and which are not changed as we go along when the Government see an opportunity to turn the screw tighter and to prevent people from entering who have honourable and legitimate—and previously lawful—reasons for doing so.

I have spoken for rather longer than I intended, largely because of interventions, and I want to give other hon. Members a chance to express their position. I conclude by telling the Home Secretary what we believe should happen.

All men and women who were unlawfully excluded as a result of Government inadequacy, mistakes or incompetence should be allowed into the country now. The idea of allowing the Home Secretary to judge which of them may or may not be allowed in does not seem tolerable, as we have seen the Home Office make such judgments before.

Another issue is that of what should be done about DNA in the future. I shall outline to the Home Secretary what we believe the procedure should be, not all of which divides us from him but some of which differs crucially from the proposals that he has been kind enough to reveal to the House in written answers and from the proposals that we know of from the leaked Home Office memorandum.

First, a man or woman applying for entry to this country as a son or daughter of a British citizen should be offered two alternative methods of proving that relationship. Such people should be allowed what I will call the traditional procedures—arguing on the evidence, supported by interview, that they are related as claimed. I hope that, if nothing else, I have made it clear today that we should like that procedure to be a good deal more objective, exact and dispassionate.

Secondly, such people should be allowed the DNA route of proof as an alternative. Applicants should be allowed to choose which route to follow, and there should be no inference that following one route is a confession of failure. To be precise, no one should think, let alone write down, that if a person was really a man's son he would have taken the DNA test. Both routes should be regarded as legitimate.

Such people should also have the right to switch from the traditional method of interview and evidence to DNA while the procedures are under way, if they want to and if, more importantly, they discover that they can afford to. I hope that the Home Secretary will make it clear in public —I am grateful to him for having made it clear to me in private last week—that if an applicant follows the DNA route and the DNA evidence is conclusive according to the scientists who do the test, that in itself will automatically be enough to ensure the entry of the person who has taken the test.

However, taking the DNA test is, as the Home Secretary knows only too well, only the beginning of the problem. DNA testing can cost, experience suggests, anything from £350 to £600. The figures at either end of that scale are beyond the pockets of many of the applicants who would most need the test. I do not understand the logic or the justice of a system which gives a person the right in law to bring in a son or daughter but prevents him from exercising that right because he cannot afford the proof. That is the very negation of a liberal and free society. It is essential that men and women who cannot afford the necessary proof to establish their legitimate claim be helped to provide the proof by the state, just as other legal systems are subsidised by the state so that other forms of juctice can be obtained by the poor and disadvantaged.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would also be very helpful if people were allowed to have blood tests taken at clinics in rural areas, since otherwise the expense and difficulty of travelling long distances is another disincentive?

Mr. Hattersley: I agree with my hon. Friend, and I go further. I know that one of the great disincentives to immigrants coming here from the Indian sub-continent is that, having turned up in Karachi after travelling overland for a day and a half to have an interview, six months later they get a letter saying that the interview was not conclusive and they have to travel overland again for a day and a half and have another interview. The entire system of examining immigration applications is based on the theory that if we can make it difficult for them to get in, we do so. The day has to come when we end that overt, conscious and deliberate disincentive.

I conclude by saying what it is essential should be said about the cost of DNA testing. It will be intolerable if individual applicants are required to pay their own fees, for that will simply mean that only the rich and never the poor will have conclusive DNA tests. It will be equally intolerable if the cost of this comparatively expensive test is borne by every other applicant to enter this country. That is clearly the Government's intention. In the memorandum that many of us have seen, one paragraph says that the Home Secretary, or perhaps the luckless Foreign Secretary, should make a separate announcement about the cost of the scheme shortly before the scheme comes into effect, to avoid a rush of applications aimed at beating the associated increase in settlement fees.

That can mean only one thing—that the cost of DNA testing is to be spread across every visitor who wants to come here, every husband who wants to join his wife, or every dependent relative. A second conclusion can be drawn, since the Home Secretary said that he has not yet

made up his mind how the fees are to be levied, but I am not sure how I could express that conclusion and remain within the rules of order.

What ought to happen is that, as with the whole business of legal aid, which is intended to help poor families to obtain justice, the cost of DNA testing should be a legitimate charge on the state. If it is not, the net result will be a perpetuation of the scandal that caused this debate. Young men and women who are entitled to be in this country with their parents will be denied the right to enter and live here, because they will not be able to afford the DNA test. That is an abomination and I should be more than grateful, I should be delighted, on behalf of my constitents if I heard from the Home Secretary that not even this Government are prepared to go that far.

7.52 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and add instead thereof:

'commends the Government's determination to operate an immigration policy which is both firm and fair, as evidenced by their new amended and consolidated immigration rules; and welcomes the Government's announcement on the use of DNA testing in immigration cases.'.

Although the motion tabled by the Labour party goes wide, quite legitimately, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) confined himself to a narrow illustration of it. I shall range rather more widely, although I shall come to the point that he made. I shall deal also with the general background, and say a word about students, who are involved in the immigration rules changes covered by the motion, and about refugees, as Turkish Kurds are also covered by the immigration rules.

I shall begin by talking about the background, and what I have to say I have for some time hoped to have an opportunity to say in the House. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and I cross swords on several matters and I have come to the conclusion, rather reluctantly, that this is the one on which we probably differ most strongly. As the right hon. Gentleman said tonight, he regards our policy as arbitrary and prejudiced. I regard the Labour party policy on these matters as being composed of one part idealism and nine parts opportunism and muddle, the most charitable analysis being that the Labour party has not thought it through.

During the 1950s, 1960s and the 1970s, large numbers of people arrived here for settlement and in the early part of that period, there was no let or hindrance to that under the law as it stood. The first immigration restrictions were imposed in 1962 and they were substantially strengthened in 1971. Both those measures were strenuously opposed by the Labour party in opposition, but both were enforced and strengthened by it when in power. Whatever the rhetoric of Opposition, the facts, when they have to be faced, are obstinate but clear. This massive change set—and to some extent continues to set—substantial problems, particularly in our cities. The dangers of resentment and prejudice, which lead to blindness and inhumanity, were and still are very great. I defy any Labour Member who represents a city area to deny the truth of that.

Successive Governments of both parties have had to deal with those dangers and there is no difference between us on that. We believe as strongly as any in working strenuously against discrimination and for equality of opportunity, to encourage members of the minorities—many of whom, as the right hon. Gentleman said, are British citizens—to live in peace and harmony in our cities and to climb, without hindrance or discouragement, all the professional ladders that exist in a free and varied society. I yield to no hon. Member in my desire to see that happen. For example, I am glad that, although the figures are still low, since 1976, when there were 182 members of the ethnic minorities in the police forces of England and Wales, that figure has increased to 1,209. It is still too low, but it is a sign of the progress that we have been making and that we are encouraging.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I am fascinated by the Home Secretary's history lesson. I was one of the immigrants who came to this country, on 15 August 1965. The right hon. Gentleman can hear this from me. What causes most fear and resentment in inner-city areas is, first, inflammatory speeches made by politicians such as the one made in 1968 by Enoch Powell. The second cause is speeches such as those made by the Home Secretary and his colleagues recently in Bradford and Birmingham, in which they lectured the immigrant community about being law-abiding citizens. The third cause is the Government's immigration policy, which denies people the right to family unity.

Mr. Hurd: I shall refer to that 1968 speech, the importance of which I acknowledge. However, the hon. Gentleman is an example of the process about which I was talking. I was not going to refer to him because I do not want to be patronising, but I welcome the day, which will not be long delayed, when the Conservative party also has members of the ethnic minorities as duly elected Members of Parliament. That is part of the process about which I am talking, and it is to be encouraged.

A condition of that progress and of the effort for equality of opportunity, however, is firm and fair immigration control. If it were felt by the majority that that control was severely weakened, I promise Labour Members that the patient work that we all do would be undermined and would fail. That is not a hypothesis—it very nearly happened in 1968. I do not wish to go into the merits or circumstances of that speech or of what happened to the Kenyan and Ugandan Asians, but I remember that period vividly. I was working for my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and I remember going to the west midlands with him. I came to the conclusion then, and I hold to it now, that if we are to work seriously for harmony, non-discrimination and equality of opportunity in our cities, that had to be accompanied by firm and fair immigration control.

Of course there should be understanding in individual cases. Of course there should be compassion—I do not shy away from that word. I hope that Opposition Members will say in public what they often say in private—that those qualities are evident in the way in which individual cases are handled by my hon. Friend the Minister of State and his officials. There are arguments about the outcome, but let no one say in public that those cases receive no human understanding.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): The Minister of State, whom the Home Secretary has just mentioned, refused to stop the deportation of a young man whom he had given

[Mrs. Alice Mahon]

a discretionary right to stay. The young man had been left in Pakistan at the age of 14. Eventually, when he reached the age of 21, it was admitted that he could come to this country, and that has been proved conclusively since. When the Minister refuses to stop such deportations, however, attitudes in the community are hardened. The Government's racist approach forges a new feeling.

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that the hon. Lady could substantiate her claim that my hon. Friend deals with individual cases in a racist way, or that there is a lack of understanding of such cases. She does her own cause no justice by making such observations.

So far, I have dealt with the general principle. I have to do that because it is so often neglected, although in my view it is fundamental to bringing about peace and harmony in our cities.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Before the Home Secretary leaves the general principle, may I ask whether he recognises that his stated objectives of firmness and fairness cannot be achieved if the criteria that inform the Government's policy are those spelt out by the Prime Minister on Tuesday, when she spoke of her unwillingness to allow any more people in? How could that possibly constitute a criterion of fairness?

Mr. Hurd: I have read Tuesday's *Hansard*. My right hon. Friend talked about annual incoming numbers of 40,000 to 50,000 and said that, in her view, that was enough. What she said was hardly a detailed statement of immigration policy.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook did not object to our setting up a DNA scheme. Before we get deeper into controversial waters, let me confirm that for some months now we have accepted the outcome of such a test as a conclusive answer.

Ms. Short: So it should—it provides absolute proof of legal entitlement.

Mr. Hurd: I am giving the right hon. Gentleman the answer that he wanted. The hon. Lady must not spoil the party.

There are two conditions for the admission of relatives under the law and the rules. One is relationship, and the other is dependence. Since 1977, 30,000 people applying to come here as dependants from the sub-continent have been refused on relationship grounds, the entry clearance office concluding that they were not relatives as they had claimed. Of those 30,000, 8,000 were lodging a claim for citizenship. That is a separate argument. If they sustained those claims, the question of relationship would not arise and the claims would be agreed.

A further 14,000 are still under 18 and, if the DNA test established the truth of their claims to relationship, they would be allowed in. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook glossed over that point. He gave the impression that we were excluding children who had now been found to have relatives here, although he did not actually say as much. Let me take the opportunity to deny that. The 14,000 who are still under 18 and who were rejected because their claims to relationship were not believed would be admitted if a DNA test established that their claims were correct, because both conditions would have been fulfilled.

Mr. Hattersley: If I gave the impression that the Government would deny children under 18 who had been turned down before the DNA test was established the chance to exercise their rights by means of that test, I concede at once that I was wrong, although I do not think that I gave such an impression. While we are in this ecumenical mood, however, will the Home Secretary confirm that a child under 18 who had been turned down because no proof had been provided in the traditional way would not, if he or she obtained a DNA certificate proving the relationship, be required to return to what is in many cases an over-long procedure? Would that child obtain a certificate there and then, or would he or she have to wait for years?

Mr. Hurd: I gather that the Foreign Office is considering the procedure. *[Interruption.]* I am trying to give an accurate answer off the cuff, but my hon. Friend the Minister may be able to spell it out.

Of the 30,000 applicants whom I have mentioned, 8,000 may or may not turn out to have relatives. If they reapplied, the answer might depend on the result of a DNA test. I do not accept the right hon. Gentleman's strictures—I do not think that it makes sense to assume that those 8,000 should be admitted whatever their present circumstances, and whether or not they are in the position described by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). Although the law provides the assumption that someone under 18 is dependent, it does not provide the same assumption in regard to anyone over that age. If those applicants were admitted regardless, one of the conditions laid down by Parliament would no longer be fulfilled.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Hurd: No; I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman once.

I will repeat the conclusion that we have reached in case it is not clear. Some of those 8,000 may apply for a DNA test, and may prove a relationship previously denied, but they are now over 18. We propose to proceed on a case-by-case basis. If the applicant has settled into independent adult life, we see no reason to go beyond the existing provisions of the immigration rules. If, however, he is still dependent on his sponsor in the United Kingdom, and if there are compassionate circumstances, we shall be ready to use our discretion as sympathetically and flexibly as possible. It is a difficult decision to make, but I believe that that is a fair and reasonable way of approaching it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I will give way to the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise), who rose first, but then I mean to get on.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Leaving aside the question of manifest injustice, may I ask whether any Conservative Members have children over 18? Would they be prepared to say that those children should be compulsorily and permanently separated from their families in this way?

Mr. Hurd: When the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook brought a delegation to see me, one of his colleagues produced the case, which was not argued out in detail, of an elderly lady from Bangladesh living, I believe, in Tower Hamlets in the east end of London. She was frail

and receiving income support, but it was said that she had, I believe, three sons who had successively had their relationship to her denied but who were doing well in Bangladesh and would be able to sustain their mother and keep her off income support. It was argued that, for the sake of family unification, it would be sensible to admit the three sons. It strikes me, however, that it would be common sense for that frail old lady to go back to Bangladesh where her sons would be able to maintain her. In such circumstances, I would not accept the argument about family unification put forward by the hon. Member for Preston.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Hurd: No, I intend to move on now.

I shall deal briefly with a point that is included in the rules to which hon. Members are objecting because it is an important test of attitudes. I refer to the student question. The vast majority of overseas students are genuine students and they are welcomed as such, but some people who enter this country as students are bogus students who do not come here to study. They come overwhelmingly from countries with similar regimes to our own. It is important not to stop people coming here as students, but we should say to them, "If you want to come here as a student, you should say so from the beginning—you should not come here as a visitor and then slide into being a student." I regard that as a test of attitudes. It is reasonable that the rules to which the Opposition object should include such a provision.

Mr. Hattersley: Does the Home Secretary believe that that rule should be applied to all students or that it should apply just to students of a particular ethnic origin?

Mr. Hurd: I regard it as reasonable where the mischief has arisen. *[Interruption.]* If the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook wishes to remain blind to the facts he can do so, but if he wishes to study the evidence of abuse, where it exists, and the proportion of it to be found in those countries where visas are required for entry to this country, we can provide him with it.

I turn to a matter about which we are constantly criticised and which may be dealt with by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) because it is very close to his heart. I refer to the treatment of refugees, with particular reference to that part of the immigration laws which deals with the Turkish Kurds. The United Nations 1951 convention defines the test of asylum, the granting of refugee status, as

"owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion or nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion."

That definition is about 38 years old and it was devised for different circumstances, but it holds up very well. The United Nations draftsmen drafted the definition well and the text is still valid in changed circumstances. Those changed circumstances are very much on my mind as well as on the mind of every Minister who has to deal with these matters.

Large parts of the Third world and of eastern Europe are in ferment of one kind or another, and many people are suffering as a result of disorder or poverty. That puts a responsibility on us, as a substantial power and as a member of the international community, to do what we can to help. For the first time, however—this is the change which has come about—many people who live in those troubled areas have just enough information and just enough money to move to European countries, including this one. That has led to the new phenomenon of middle men. We saw it with the Tamils a few years ago, and we are beginning to see it again with the arrival of the Turkish Kurds. Middle men go to such people and gull them into parting with part of their savings in order to come here or to other European countries. They promise that it is all fixed—that when the people arrive they will get a job and a house and that it will be easy.

In the face of that change, which may continue for a long time, the question that should be argued through in the press and also in this House is whether we should stick to the 1951 convention and the definition that I quoted, or whether we should enlarge it and say that people unfortunate enough to live in countries less peaceful and prosperous than our own should for that reason be admitted. The 1951 convention provides—and we honour it—that every request for asylum should be individually examined. I believe that it is right to stick to the 1951 convention. Again, I believe that it is right to be flexible in individual cases and to make use of the right that I have to grant exceptional leave to remain in this country.

I should like to make the point—it would be interesting to have the Opposition's view on this—that if everyone who asked for asylum were to be admitted, as some press criticism comes very close to urging, the loophole in immigration control would be so wide as to amount to a drastic weakening of our immigration laws. *[Interruption.]* I have read a good deal of comment in the last few weeks which comes very close to advocating such a policy. *[Interruption.]* I have read consistent advice to the effect that we should be very much more lax, that we should move beyond the 1951 convention and its definition, which I have quoted, and be much more sympathetic to admitting people who come here not because of any well-founded fear of persecution but because they come from a disorderly or poverty-stricken part of the world. I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman would deny that.

Mr. Hattersley: Until his last little flourish, the Home Secretary was wisely redefining his original assertion out of existence. As he wishes to pursue the case, I ask him in terms who has suggested that a person should have the right to enter this country simply because a man or woman designates himself as a refugee, and who has suggested that poverty should be one of the criteria for refugee status?

Mr. Hurd: There is a raft of press cuttings suggesting that in the context of—*[Interruption.]* I am not saying and I have never said that the right hon. Gentleman has advocated that at any time, but I am trying to coax him into a little strictness of expression about these matters, which I believe to be necessary.

Between May and the time when the visa regime came into effect on 22 June, 3,700 Turks asked for asylum in this country, 140 of whom went back without waiting for examination because they found that the conditions here were not as they had expected them to be. That is not a characteristic of a genuine refugee. So far, 171 have been interviewed, 15 of whom have been granted asylum, while 49 have been granted exceptional leave to remain and 23 have been refused asylum and removed. More than 77 are still in this country and our initial view is that they are not

[Mr. Hurd]

genuine refugees. I give those figures to show the scrupulous nature of the individual examination of such cases. All those who asked for asylum have been or are being individually examined.

Ms. Short: Those figures are interesting, but that is the first group of people who actually got in. Some of them have been found to be genuine refugees, and they have been treated accordingly. But has not the Home Secretary now changed the procedure with the result that absolutely genuine refugees can no longer get in? That is our complaint.

Mr. Hurd: I do not agree with the hon. Lady, but if she wishes to develop the point, the Minister of State—my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton)—will deal with it later. However, I do not believe that that is the case.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the concern about the same point which has been expressed on behalf of asylum seekers who have gone through the appeals procedure and have then been sent back to their country of origin. A case involving four Tamils is currently being sponsored by Amnesty International, and that case is being dealt with. Will my right hon. Friend consider that point carefully? Without fully exhausting the appeals system, we may be returning to their country of origin people who could be regarded as being in moral and political danger in that country. There is clear evidence in a few cases that people have been persecuted on their return to their own country.

Mr. Hurd: I do not accept that point. I hesitate to say anything more because the matter is still before the courts, but I do not accept that we acted improperly in any way or in a way that was contrary to our obligations.

It is perfectly understandable that people should have expressed concern about the fact that some of the Turkish asylum applicants were being—and some still are—held in prison. I share the concern about that. At the peak, some 200 were being held in prison. Now there are 59 people being held in prison and 100 more in the accommodation provided for detained immigrants. The examination of their claims is being given priority. The alternative is to let into this country people who have no particular links here, and there is no particular reason to think that we would ever see them again if we did. That is a difficult choice for officers to make in individual cases. I very much hope that we can bring that episode to an end quickly now that the visa regime is in place.

Mr. Janman: I applaud the measures that the Government are introducing with regard to immigration from Turkey, but how will my right hon. Friend deal with the situation in future if Turkey's membership of the European Community is successful?

Mr. Hurd: Without trespassing on the territory of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, I can say that that problem is a little way off.

I will give the House the latest general figures on refugees. Last year, we received 5,100 applications for asylum and 3,700 decisions were taken. A quarter of those applying were accepted and 55 per cent. were given exceptional leave to remain. That shows the hon. Member for Ladywood the pattern. The rate of applications this year is about double that for last year. By the end of June, we had received about 5,000 applications.

Returning to the basic problem which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook set and which was illustrated by the interventions in my speech, it is not enough for the right hon. Gentleman, when challenged by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), to say that he is in favour of immigration control, but that everything has to be considered on merit. We have to proceed by way of rules. Since I have had to study their attitudes, the right hon. Gentleman, his predecessor, and the Labour party have said loudly, particularly during elections—the right hon. Gentleman has also done so today—that they are strongly in favour of immigration control. Then, every time a decision comes up, every time a loophole identifies itself, and whenever any single category comes under discussion, they say that the Government should give way and that admission should be permitted.

That is not a possible way to proceed. It is possible to say that the numbers should be greatly increased and that the categories should be greatly relaxed, but it is not intellectually coherent or respectable for the Opposition to say that they are strongly in favour of immigration control and that they accept that harmony in our cities depends upon it, but that in every individual case they will have nothing to do with enforcing the rules.

I understand the short-term calculation which has led to those attitudes case by case. Control is bound to be unpopular with those who are disappointed by individual decisions. My hon. Friend the Minister of State and I come up against that time and again. We are bound to disappoint people in particular categories. The people of all races in our cities who benefit from strict control are hardly aware of that benefit, but such is life.

Administering control is a thankless task. I do not share the sneers and snide remarks that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook devoted to those who have to administer the controls. I readily admit that I and my hon. Friend the Minister of State are fair game, but it was grossly unfair to speak in that way of the immigration officers. They do a thankless job but it is a necessary task. I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman wants the National Front to triumph in his constituency. The National Front had no candidates at all in the last election. I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman wants to see in Britain the changes in public opinion which sent six German MEPs representing anti-foreigner far Right parties to the European Parliament, and a similar number from France. I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman wants that, but his attitude towards immigration control would bring that about if it were realised. It would cause suspicion and resentment, and plenty of people are ready to leap on that bandwagon.

My hon. Friend and I will continue to apply a strict but fair system of control, not because we are prejudiced or inhumane, but because we believe that control is needed if all the people who live in our cities are to live together in tolerance and decent harmony.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. It will be evident to the House that many right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak. I hope that we can have very brief speeches.

8.24 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The Home Secretary's speech ranged very widely and it is tempting to follow him, but because I am aware of the brevity of the debate, which has been supplied by the Opposition out of their own time, I shall pursue the matter of most immediate concern to myself, and probably to most right hon. and hon. Members in the House this evening—DNA tests and the so-called over-age reapplicant. Those are people who originally applied for entry certificates when they were children, who were refused because the entry clearance officers were not convinced by the evidence of their relationship to their parents, who have subsequently been vindicated by DNA tests and who are still to be denied entry certificates on the ground that they are now 18 and not dependants. I believe that a grave injustice has been done to them and their families, and instead of being remedied, that injustice will be perpetuated by Government policy.

Before I deal with that major theme, I want to discuss two important but lesser matters relating to the written answer given by the Home Secretary to the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) on 14 June and to remarks made by the Minister of State in the Adjournment debate on 21 June.

My first question concerns the scheme to be introduced later this year for organising DNA testing on a regular basis. In his written answer on 14 June the Home Secretary refers to

"the implementation of a Government scheme later this year in relation to first-time settlement applicants".

Why does it apply only to first-time settlement applicants? Certainly DNA tests will be a valuable and conclusive proof of relationships when claims made on behalf of first-time applicants are in dispute. But the Home Secretary surely knows of the heartache and grievances felt not by first-time applicants, but by those who may have applied several times before, who have exhausted at least once the whole protracted appeals procedure and who have still been turned down. Why should they be excluded from the presumably faster and cheaper DNA testing scheme that the Government are to introduce? I hope that the Home Secretary or the Minister of State when he replies to the debate will answer that question.

My second question refers to the cost of DNA testing. The cost is heavy. My information is that a man and his wife with a family of three children will face a bill of some £2,000 for DNA testing. In his written answer the Home Secretary appeared to recognise that, when he said that it was necessary

"to strike a balance between not imposing too great a burden either on the individual applicant or on the taxpayer".—[*Official Report*, 14 June 1989; Vol. 154, c. *463-64*.]

That clearly suggests a scheme in which there would be a contribution from public funds as well as a fee charged to applicants.

However, in the Adjournment debate of 21 June, the Minister of State said:

"We made it clear from the outset that any DNA scheme will not be funded out of taxpayers' money. Our policy is that the cost of the entry clearance process should be met by the applicants themselves rather than by the taxpayer."

On the face of it, the Home Secretary and the Minister of State seemed to be saying different things, but the Minister of State continued:

"We recognise, of course, that the tests are expensive, particularly where several members of the same family are applying."—[*Official Report*, 21 June 1989; Vol. 155 c. 472.]

Can we get this clear? Is it the Government's intention that a small family will have to meet the whole cost of the DNA test whereas a large family will be assisted by the taxpayers' contribution to the DNA bill? I hope that the Minister of State will clear that up when he replies to the debate. Better still, I hope that he will agree that all the cost should be borne by the taxpayer. Most applicants come from poor families, and it is wrong that children who have a right to join their families should be denied the opportunity of a DNA test simply because their parents cannot afford it.

Ms. Short: DNA testing appears expensive, but I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware how expensive existing procedures are. Our staff in the sub-continent are kept at much expense and provided with housing, so there are potential savings in using DNA. It is a cheek for the Government to say that people must pay for DNA tests when it is likely that they will lead to the Government saving money. Instead, the Government will extract more money from poor people for exercising their legal rights.

Mr. Shore: Savings may be made, but we are not in a position to say definitely. It is intolerable if people who are entitled to a DNA test, in the firm belief that it will provide the necessary evidence to join their parents and obtain an entry certificate, are unable to do so simply because they do not have the money. We surely cannot justify such a position. The analogy by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) with legal aid for poor people who cannot afford our system of justice is surely applicable in this case.

Mr. Lawrence: Is not the logic of the right hon. Gentleman's argument that it is iniquitous that people who cannot afford to come here under their own steam should not be subsidised by having their fares paid by the British taxpayer? Is that not the same argument?

Mr. Shore: I do not think that it is; that would carry the issue to a point that I would not accept. The argument about separating children from their parents because they do not have the money to provide the necessary proof cannot be accepted by any sensible and civilised person who holds the values that should be predominant in our public life.

My main concern is about an applicant being refused entry as a child whose relationship is proved by a DNA test but is over 18 when the new evidence comes to light. Clearly, in such a case a great injustice has been done. I know of many cases in my constituency where the husband has been separated for years from his wife and children because documentary evidence has been judged inadequate. I also know of cases where one member of the family has been separated from his parents and brothers and sisters because, while they have been given entry certificates and come to the United Kingdom, he or she has been denied entry on the ground that in his or her case the evidence is unsatisfactory.

I have no doubt that in most cases those who grant or refuse entry certificates, the adjudicators and the other bodies to which those who are refused entry appeal, are

[Mr. Shore]

careful and conscientious in their work, but apart from human fallibility we all know that Bangladesh in particular and the Indian sub-continent in general are societies that are under-documented for the purposes of immigration control. The question is what should be done to remedy that injustice, even though the injustice was unwittingly committed.

Mr. Hind: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shore: No, I will not; I must finish.

In his written answer on 14 June, the Home Secretary said, and he restated it this evening:

"In many cases over-age applicants are likely to have settled into independent adult life and may also have married and established a family of their own overseas and I do not propose to waive the requirements of the rules in these cases."—[*Official Report*, 14 June 1989; Vol. 154, *c. 464.*]

Those cases, of course, will include many people who were wrongly refused entry clearance when they first applied. This is a harsh and unfeeling decision. When an injustice has been committed, and when that injustice has been proved by the results of DNA testing, the onus is on the Government to remedy their mistakes and to redress grievances.

I did not understand from the figures given by the Home Secretary how many people will be involved. Perhaps the Minister of State can give a clearer statement about the number of people over the age of 18 who will be eligible. But numbers are irrelevant to the issue of proven injustice. That injustice should be removed, and it can be removed only by giving the entry certificate that was previously refused or by offering a substantial sum in compensation for the hardship caused to the individual concerned and his family.

When considering that question, Home Office Ministers appear to have omitted two immensely important considerations. The first is the strength of links of families from Bangladesh and the Indian sub-continent. Our family structure in Britain is becoming increasingly atomised, with the physical separation of parents from children once they reach adult years and each adult child establishing his separate residence. Families of the sub-continent are very different. Different generations live together; adult members of the same family, even when married, often live with their brothers and sisters and parents or remain in close proximity to them. It is not enough, therefore, to say that once the child has ceased to be financially dependent on his parents it does not matter if they are compelled to live thousands of miles apart for the rest of their lives. It matters enormously. The second factor that should not be overlooked is the adverse affect on the ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom and on our progress towards the fairer system that we all want.

I conclude what was meant to be a brief intervention by saying to the Home Secretary that I seriously hope that he will reconsider DNA testing, but not in the aggrieved spirit that he showed in his speech tonight. I hope that he will have the humanity and courage to come back to the House with a revised decision.

8.36 pm

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): You have asked hon. Members to be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I shall be.

The right hon Member for Birmingham Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was rather churlish, as he often is. Being his near neighbour in the area, and having known the people whom he represents for some time, I found it astonishing that he did not once mention his countrymen.

Mr. Hattersley: We will only begin to make progress on this subject when people such as the hon. Gentleman realise that the Moslems in my constituency are my countrymen. That is the crucial division between Conservative and Labour Members.

Sir John Stokes: I shall not comment on the speech made by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), but it was good to hear him speaking again. We all know what an English patriot he is and we remember his stance on the Falklands war. We only wish that we could hear his views on Europe given from the Front Bench.

It is extraordinary that the Opposition have again tabled such a motion. Anyone listening to speeches by Opposition Members would imagine that we are being unduly restrictive in our rules of entry. If one were to go outside this place and ask someone in the street, "Is that true?" they would say, "No, over the past 25 years this country has been extraordinarily generous in letting many people into this country, some of whom have done very well, and how glad we are about it." We have allowed many people into this densely populated island, with all the pressures that that caused, and about 40,000 or 50,000 people are still allowed to come here every year. Surely common sense says that there must be strict immigration controls, in the interests not only of the indigenous population but of immigrants.

We must control immigration, as it says in the rules, so that visiting students do not overstay and illegal immigration is curbed as far as possible. We must control the plea of marriage to support entry into this country because of the danger of it being used for bogus reasons. We must be careful not to let in people who claim to be refugees but are not really so. In a notorious case some time ago, some clerics made fools of themselves over a man who was not a refugee and went back to his country.

The Opposition do not appear to have a clear policy, except to say, "Let them all come in." They are saying the same thing about the millions of Hong Kong Chinese.

Ms. Short: We are not.

Sir John Stokes: I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on making this change to the rules which will be of benefit to everyone in this country. *[Interruption.]* I hope that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) will let me say a few words. As my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) said on 20 June.

"Good though the changes are, they are too late."—[*Official Report*, 20 June 1989; Vol. 155, c. 293.]

In the past 25 years, we have allowed hundreds of thousands of immigrants into this small island so that we now have ethnic minorities of several million people and in some cases, as we all know, their birth rate far exceeds that of the indigenous population. This is primarily a problem for England, as the other countries in the United Kingdom have much smaller immigrant populations.

Why are we English Members of Parliament here today? I ask that question of the Opposition, too. Are we not the trustees of this beloved England for posterity?

What is the future of our country to be in another 25 years, even if all immigration is stopped tomorrow? What will be the effect on our religion, morals, customs, habits and so on? Already there have been some dangerous eruptions from parts of the Moslem community. Having served with the Moslems during the war, may I say that I greatly admire many of them and their religion. I also very much like the letter which my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office wrote to Moslem leaders and which was published in the newspapers today. It is foolish to ignore the problems and the fears that those dangerous eruptions engender among the ordinary people whom we are supposed to represent.

We must not allow our feelings of guilt over our treatment of immigrants to cloud our judgment. We in England are a gentle, kind, tolerant and peace-loving people. We have already absorbed large numbers of newcomers. Except occasionally, there have not been the riots and bloodshed that some people prophesied. The burden of receiving and coping with these newcomers in our midst has fallen not on the intellectuals, Labour Members of Parliament and others of that ilk but on ordinary English working-class people. Surely they are entitled to a voice here.

Vast changes have been made in the cities because of the large numbers of immigrants living there. The local English people were never asked about this. They never had to vote on it. They must have views about the future of this influx. They look to us to safeguard their position. Everyone here—immigrant or non-immigrant—wants to safeguard our position. As I said, fortunately we have not had much bloodshed or rioting, and relations generally are good, but as the figures on those who are still coming in are published, more and more people are starting to say, "Will this go on, or can we say that enough is enough?" This is a small attempt to have a little more control, and very wise it is. It should be welcomed by everyone in the House and outside.

8.43 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Home Secretary began his speech somewhat censoriously by suggesting that the Labour party was using immigration issues in an opportunistic way and then, to justify his Government's policy, reiterated the view that racial harmony depends upon a firm, fair immigration policy. It is by his tests, of firmness and fairness—especially fairness—that it is right to judge the proposals on DNA profiling. In their present state, the right hon. Gentleman has not resolved the doubts about their application. I do not believe that they meet the test of fairness.

The aim in testing only first-time settlement applicants is to avoid the possibility of disputes which, in the past, have been protracted and troublesome to immigration authorities. The repeated application cases most require the assistance of DNA testing. I should like to hear from the Minister of State why he proposes to confine the use of DNA testing in this way. Is it simply on grounds of cost?

Another issue, which I hoped that the Home Secretary would resolve, concerns how the scheme should be funded. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) drew attention to the apparent contradictions between the statements made by the Minister of State and the Home Secretary on the extent to which there was to be public funding of DNA testing. There appears to be some intention that certain categories of individual should be assisted by the taxpayer, but it is possible to interpret the Minister's utterances as meaning that the cost is to be borne by all immigrants. That would certainly not be an appropriate or fair test. If the Minister can clear up this point now, I shall be grateful to him.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): It might be convenient to the House if I clear up that point, which was raised also by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). There is no intention that the taxpayer should pay any part of the cost of DNA tests. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and I have said that many times. The only exception lies in the possibility of legal aid for DNA tests. We have said many times that, if we introduced a general scheme for DNA tests—as we are proposing to do on a voluntary basis—the scheme's cost would not in any way fall on the taxpayer.

Mr. Maclennan: The whole House will have been shocked by the Minister's intervention. It is clear that the system cannot be fair unless there is some financial support from the taxpayer. Undoubtedly, the taxpayer will save considerably through the use of DNA testing rather than the alternative methods of verification which are presently employed and which involve searches and expenditure, especially in Bangladesh and on the Indian sub-continent. It is clear that DNA testing can operate only when rich or relatively rich applicants seek to employ it. By no standard can that be regarded as fair.

Mr. Hind: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: This is a short debate and many hon. Members with major constituency interests wish to speak, so I shall not give way.

DNA testing can prove, almost beyond peradventure, the paternity of applicants. Should this system be available to those who, it transpires, have been refused entry to this country but are now over the age of majority? Here again, I appeal to the Minister to reconsider the situation. The Home Secretary spoke of the importance of there being rules in giving the assurance of fairness. In respect of this important issue—we have not yet been told precisely how many people are estimated to be affected by it—the Home Secretary is saying——

Mr. Renton: Eight thousand.

Mr. Maclennan: In that case, this is almost a de minimis problem. The question must be answered: what are the rules? It is clear from what the Home Secretary said that it is to be a wholly discretionary operation. By his own test, we should have rules if we want to instill a sense of fairness.

A number of criteria may be prayed in aid by those who wish to argue compassionate grounds, which have been referred to in another place by the Minister's colleague. There are wide circumstances in which it may be possible to argue a compassionate case, but equally, it is possible that those could be construed extremely restrictively to deprive the offspring of those entitled to live here of the right to join their families. It is incomprehensible for a party in government which proclaims the virtues of family life to argue in that way. It will be incomprehensible to

[Mr. Maclennan]

many fair-minded people that people whose right to be here can now be established will be denied that possibility because of an exercise in discretion by a Secretary of State.

I am afraid that the great opportunity offered by the perfection of this technique has been missed. There was an opportunity to put an end to much of the misery and uncertainty involved in establishing paternity and family links, which flow from a lack of documentation, especially in the Indian sub-continent. It must be a matter of deep regret to those who wish to see racial harmony fostered and sustained by a fair immigration policy that the Government have thrown away so cavalierly this great opportunity.

8.52 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I want to begin by saying to my hon. Friend the Minister that he probably has the most unattractive job in the whole Government. He is confronted daily with cases of human misery in which he has to take extremely hard decisions, not only on the basis of each particular case, but on the basis of how it fits into the general framework. Men and women all over this country and around the world are accountable to him and are busily engaged in trying to interpret the wishes of this place and of the Minister against a background of similar heartbreak and difficulty. I pay them tribute for the way in which they carry out that task.

I have no personal experience of being an immigrant or a would-be immigrant. I was fortunate enough to be born, strictly speaking, a cockney, and I have never had any doubt about my eligibility to be a British citizen. However, that does not mean that one cannot experience some of the difficulties vicariously. When I was working at Conservative central office, I was the director of community affairs for four and a half years. One of my tasks in that interesting period was to extend throughout the Conservative party mechanisms whereby members of that party could become far better acquainted with the new citizens who had arrived from different parts of the world, about whom, in their ignorance, many members of the party were anxious and towards whom they were hostile.

Ignorance of the law may be no excuse, but in matters of personal relations, there is no doubt that ignorance of custom, language and religion is often a reasonable excuse for feeling strange and, because of the way in which human nature works, consequently feeling condemnatory in one way or another. I believe that the work we did then played a small part in the creation of a wider understanding within the Conservative party——

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): It has failed here.

Mr. Rowe: We were more successful in some parts of the country than in others. I believe that that played some part in changing the climate of opinion. However, there is still far too much prejudice in this country. It is noticeable in many statistics and in the accounts people give to Members of Parliament of the way in which they have been treated. One must, of course, always be extremely careful about the natural tendency of those who belong to a minority, whatever it may be, when they do not get what they want, to assume that their failure to do so is directly attributable to their membership of that minority, when that is frequently not the case. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that there is still too much prejudice and too much difficulty for the minorities in climbing the ladders which at least now exist for them to climb.

Such difficulty is one of the ingredients in the unfortunate riots and protests over the Salman Rushdie book. I believe that the law on blasphemy should be repealed rather than extended. It is flouted to the point where it is absurd to retain it and it is therefore unworkable. It is also philosophically unsound, because it is rooted in theocracy and I believe that theocracy is a recipe for bad government and oppression. A theocratic Government are very different from a society under God.

It is perfectly clear that the pressures are made worse when many people come in at great speed and, as the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, there is no division between Government and Opposition about the need for immigration controls. I sometimes think that hon. Members of all parties are rather like small children who, behind the security of their garden gate, poke fun at other small children and then run back into the security of their front hall because they know that the children will not cross the fence that has been erected. That fence of immigration control has been erected by both parties in this House equally. It is salutary for Opposition Members to remember the large part played by their own party in building those walls.

I should like to distance myself considerably from the remarks of my respected and revered hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes), who echoed an argument which I hope is dead, or at least nearly dead. In an ideal world, there would be no frontiers and people could move from one part of the world to another without let or hindrance. Indeed, in our favoured corner of the world that is exactly what we are constructing. This debate has already shown some of the difficulties that we shall encounter if we are successful in that construction. Clearly, this is not an ideal world, and it is essential that we have a firm and fair immigration policy.

In the troubled and worrying debate about Hong Kong, it is important that my hon. Friends, Ministers and others should be sparing in their use of the argument about millions of people; if we are to be a great deal more generous about the numbers of people from Hong Kong whom we eventually receive into this country—and I believe that we have a duty to be generous—that argument will have done no good to those people's chances of having a proper reception here. We should not use massive figures such as 3·5 million or 5 million people, because that will stir up anxieties that we should not invite.

I seek the reassurance of my hon. Friend on one element of the policy. I share the view of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) who, in November of last year, pointed out his anxiety that married couples should be reunited as quickly as possible when it is proved that they have a right to be together. It is a flaw in our immigration policy that, where people have established a bona fide right to be together, they can then be denied that right by administrative procedures stretching over many years.

Do I understand from what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said that, if children below the age of 18 are proved by the DNA process to have family bonds, there will be no question of the procedures being extended once these children become more than 18, and

that their age will not then be used as a pretext for excluding them? If that were the case, it would be grossly improper. It is easy to discover that, by sheer inadvertence or lack, somebody's case has been extended for two or three years by the administrative procedures and that that person has somehow fallen foul of his or her right to enter this country. It is easy to turn that into a matter of policy. I stress that that would be a shabby way in which to proceed.

In conclusion, I turn to the other side of the coin. Unless something has happened to her aeroplane, my wife is in Madras at the moment, where she is working for some weeks with a skilled paediatrician who is still in Madras because of his Christian belief that he has a duty to return to the people of Madras the benefits that he has enjoyed. He is the only member of his class in medical school to have remained in India. That is a commentary on the whole business of immigration. The fact that some countries have too great a readiness to admit foreign nationals can easily lead the home country to become emasculated. That is undesirable——

Ms. Gordon *rose*——

Mr. Rowe: I shall not give way, as I am just about to end my speech.

It is wholly appropriate to have a firm and fair immigation policy. Where our techniques have improved to the point at which we can remove doubt speedily, I believe that we should turn that speed to the advantage of the applicant and not allow the adminstrative procedures to drag out.

9.4 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): The Home Secretary was hopelessly wrong to make a connection between immigration policy and good community relations in our inner-city areas. If he needs a connection, he should study very carefully the speech by the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes) because that was the kind of speech which causes great unpleasantness and distrust and also causes a great deal of damage to good community relations in Britain. That speech echoed sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) in a short debate last week. When the Minister replies, I hope that he will distance himself from the comments which have been made by his two hon. Friends. It is important that in their official policy the Government make it absolutely clear that the extremist statements that we have heard are not part of Government policy.

The Home Secretary's written reply to a parliamentary question on 14 June which set out the Government's policy on DNA testing is a recognition of the success of such tests. As this is our first debate of this length on the subject, we should pay tribute to the work of Professor Alec Jefferies of Leicester university and others who have worked in this area for several years. We should also place on record our appreciation of the work of groups like the Divided Families Campaign, the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service which have worked very hard urging the Government to initiate pilot studies and to publish their report.

Three years have passed since a press conference was held on 10 January 1986 at Dhaka airport when the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department first announced the pilot schemes. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) will recall the number of attempts that he and I made in Committee to press the Minister to publish the report as quickly as possible. Although many promises were made, it was several years before the report was published.

When the report was published, the greatest sigh of relief came from those who had waited in queues and those waiting to have relatives brought to this country. Those are the kind of people who visit me, my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) and other hon. Members at our surgeries at weekends. Those people waited in hope that the Home Secretary would announce a fair policy which would reunite them with their families.

I am reminded of a quote from the oldest book of all:

"Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginnings of days, nor ends of life".

The orphans of the Prime Minister's immigration policy, they waited in queues. Those people have waited for a statement and they have been cruelly misled. The Home Secretary has let them down in several vital respects.

It is right that we should place this debate in the context of overall immigration control. As the Home Secretary said that the Minister of State was fair game for any criticism, I hope that he does not mind if I mention the unprecedented crisis which now grips the Home Office. There is a crisis at Lunar house, where my constituents must wait up to two years to receive decisions on nationalisation applications, and there is a crisis besetting the passport offices. There is also a crisis besetting hon. Members who, when they write to the Minister, must wait upwards of six weeks for a reply. Those who were present in this House on 16 November 1987 will recall the Home Secretary's statement at column 789 that he hoped to initiate an immigration policy that would provide a better customer service. The reality is quite different. If the Home Secretary, the Minister and the Home Office want to know about that customer service, they should speak to people who wait in the queues at Clive house and Lunar house for decisions from the Minister of State.

I want now to consider the cost of the scheme. I was shocked to hear the Minister's reply to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). It is outrageous that poor families will have to pay a substantial amount to satisfy the test criteria. There have been various estimates, ranging from £100 to £130 per applicant. In addition, there is the threat that entry clearance fees will be increased, allegedly to pay for the test. That is an additional economic barrier for those who seek to come to this country.

The taxpayer has benefited and will continue to benefit from the DNA test. There will be an enormous saving of time in the preparation of documents, explanatory statements and other documents before the tribunal, and also a saving of the tribunal's time. A recent answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) stated that the cost of an appeal was approximately £85. If that is right—I hope that the Minister will correct me if I am wrong—it will result in a substantial saving.

I now refer to over-age applicants. It is manifestly unfair that, now that the Government have acknowledged that thousands of mistakes have been made, people who legitimately and fairly applied to come to this country and who knew instinctively that they were the children of their

[Mr. Keith Vaz]

parents, and felt that not only as a bond of nature but passionately, were told by immigration officers that they were not the children of their parents and that they would have to appeal and wait. They now find that what they have always said was true—that they know exactly who their parents were—but they will not be able to come here as of right.

We are concerned only with a finite number of people. If we are talking about a fair system that can be sold to inner-city areas and is based on family values, surely it is right that those people should be allowed to come to this country without having to rely on the Home Secretary's so-called compassion.

The test should be free for those who wish to use it. The Home Secretary should allow in those who applied before their eighteenth birthday and who were caught by the age limit. As other hon. Members have said, blood sample testing should take place in different parts of the sub-continental countries, and individuals should not have to face the burden of additional costs when travelling to posts abroad. Those who reapply should be given preference and should be put in an expedited queue. It is outrageous to expect them to reapply, sit in queues and, possibly, wait for nearly two years when their cases are strong and right.

What compensation is the Minister prepared to offer those who have suffered because of the Government's mistake? The Minister and the Home Secretary have deliberately delayed the publication of the report for several months, if not years. The Government should compensate those who have suffered untold misery.

We hear cliches when Members of Parliament come to this forum of the nation and talk about constituents who have been waiting for years to be reunited with their families. I am not saying that the Minister is an absolutely insensitive man. He has shown a degree of compassion that has permitted certain of my constituents to remain in this country. We told him that those people had a proper case, delays occurred, but he eventually allowed them to stay. We are not saying that, as an individual, he is without compassion, but we are saying that the policy is without compassion.

The policy will add to the anxiety and the hardship suffered by thousands and thousands of people throughout the country. If we are talking about having good race relations and improving community relations, we should ensure that we treat everyone fairly. We should treat those who come from India, Pakistan and the sub-continent countries with the same affection as we are now treating our colleagues in Germany, France, Portugal and elsewhere in Europe. We should not let them suffer because we are now part of the European Economic Community, which will, of course, allow millions of people to come here as of right.

The Government had a golden opportunity to act as the midwife for family reunion to those who had long given up hope of ever being reunited with their families. Grudgingly, the Government have admitted that the Alec Jefferies test was correct, and grudgingly, they have accepted the campaigns and the hard work of the voluntary organisations. They have accepted that those organisations were right after all. However, the knife in the back of those voluntary organisations and of all those who wait in the queues abroad is the terrible burden of cost that is now being imposed, and the injustice of the age limit. Even at this stage, I appeal to the Minister—as a loving parent—in humanity, in justice and in compassion, to think again.

9.16 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): The phrasing of the motion is, to say the least, misleading. I believe that it is designed to be misleading to different groups of the British people. Everyone would accept that tough and fair immigration policies are a necessary part of race relations. It is unfortunate that Members on the Labour Front Bench have sought to mislead different groups in Britain and have in many ways sought to rubbish DNA testing, which can surely be regarded only as an advance in fairness and something that should be welcomed by both sides of the House.

Like many other hon. Members, I wish to concentrate on the last few words of the motion, which concern the effects on Britain of having immigrant populations and people who are black or Asian and British. I believe that that is one of the most important issues facing society.

It is estimated by the Institute of Race Relations that there may be 70,000 racial attacks a year. Certainly, in my constituency in suburban London, I receive a large number of complaints, especially from Asian people, about racial attacks and racial abuse. If we are honest, we will admit that that goes on, but that too many people turn a blind eye to it and just consider it part of the background to British society. But it is not part of that background —such behaviour needs to be condemned at every stage and must be taken seriously.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider one idea. It is not a new idea, but it is one that I believe would make an important contribution towards dealing with the problem. The Metropolitan police need a racial attack squad, just as they have a serious crime squad, a fraud squad and a squad to specialise in any of the areas of crime which need more than local expertise. They need a racial attack squad for serious cases, to give advice to local police forces, to formulate policy and to teach techniques for dealing with racial matters. I am not saying that the Metropolitan police have not made some advances in dealing with racial harassment and attacks, but they can do more, and I would look to them to do more.

Too many people still consider it acceptable to hold racist views. Such views help to categorise black and Asian people, but strong leadership at all levels will help the emerging middle classes in those communities. They will represent the genuine voice of those communities, and we want to hear it. Everyone in a position of leadership should encourage good race relations. We need a drive against discrimination, but not a re-run of discredited so-called "anti-racist" policies. We need tangible measures that will make a difference.

The Government have an enormous part to play. When Government money is used to fund major projects in the inner cities, the work force should be representative of the ethnic make-up of the area. Any company that wanted such funding would soon get the message and would employ a good proportion of black and Asian people if the Government insisted on considering the ethnic make-up of

the companies, and such people would not merely be employed as building workers—they would be employed throughout the company management structure.

The Government could act much more directly through the Civil Service. They must review their employment practices, not just for the lower grades but for those right at the top. Our record for tailoring our recruitment procedures to the true make-up of the population can only be described as pathetic. It is clear that the Civil Service has continued to recruit the same sort of people in the same old way, without regard to the reality of British society outside the narrow class band from which recruits are drawn. Something must be done about that.

My right hon. Friend was right to praise the advances that have been made in the recruitment of black and Asian people to the police, but the record is not stunning. Given that so few black and Asian people are part of our police force, it is not surprising that the police have difficulty policing some areas. I do not underestimate the difficulties of recruiting such people, but if other countries can manage to recruit large numbers of their minority populations, so can we. The minority communities also have an important part to play in this. Improvements will not be made unless the minority communities desist from actively persuading people not to join the police. If the ordinary, sensible view is to prevail, a recruitment push from inside the black and Asian communities must be mounted against the predictable, damaging and regrettably prevailing anti-police view. Only by such assertiveness from ordinary black and Asian people will the majority learn that, far from fearing minorities, Britain has everything to gain from black and Asian British people playing their part at the centre of our community.

The most important ingredient is the contribution that the minorities can make. It is in all our interests to be proud of being British. That means that we must challenge the parrot cry of "Uncle Tom" and recognise that the interests of the majority are not those of a politically motivated minority. It means isolating the extremists. It also means that each black and Asian person should find his role in our society. British society needs their input, not as Asian or black people or as people speaking for a minority, but as individual British people who care about Britain, who care about where they live, and who have a contribution to make and a part to play. This is part of a two-way contract, and no amount of work from one side will make up for lack of effort by the other. The potential rewards for Britain and its people are huge. It is worth the effort not just because of what we can achieve, but because of the consequences of our failure to achieve it.

In common with my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), I wish to dissociate myself from the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes), although I do so for a different reason. I do so because the vision of Britain put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge simply does not exist, probably never did exist and never will exist in the future. It is not right to put forward such an unattainable vision. It is 20 years since Enoch Powell made his powerful but career-ending speech. Many people saw that speech as a self-fulfilling prophecy. It was a callous and deliberately misleading speech which he sought to use as a means of promoting his political career, but it backfired on him—as all who seek to use this issue for their political careers will see it backfire on them.

9.24 pm

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): The hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) has done something to put right the shameful speeches that we have heard from many hon. Members on the other side of the House. The Home Secretary said tonight that there must be rules, and we have been talking about people who have every right to come to this country within the rules that this Government laid down. Nevertheless, they were branded as liars, as cheats, as people who were trying to get in here by fraud and, in addition to the humiliation that they suffered in this way, they suffered long separation from their families.

I do believe that if this had happened to white people there would have been a demand for compensation. Anybody who has been wrongfully branded, and their character torn apart in this way, has the right to compensation. Yet, they are not even going to be given considerate treatment, from what we have heard tonight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) is quite right to raise the question of people from the EC countries. Nobody ever says that we are going to be swamped by white Europeans coming to this country, and nobody counts the numbers. But there seems to be a lot of political mileage in appealing to the basest instincts of racists by talking about being swamped and playing the numbers game, when we should be talking about dealing fairly with those families from the Asian sub-continent who have been given a very unfair deal indeed.

It seems that the cases of those who apply for re-entry are not going to be expedited and that those who cannot afford to go through DNA testing will find themselves looked upon askance as though that means that they do not have a valid case, and that is a very grave danger. I also feel that the Home Secretary's example was a very shocking one. He talked of an old woman in this country who had three sons who could well afford to keep her although she was living on supplementary benefit—so why should we allow the sons to come here even though they were wrongly kept out? He said that she should go back to her own country. I find echoes in that of the crudest form of racism—one which says, "Get back to your own country." Surely it is easier for the sons to come and start a new life here, than for the old lady, who needs the care and attention of her sons, and who has been settled here for many years, to be uprooted and to go back to a place where she now has no connections. What kind of compassion and what kind of humanity is that?

I wanted to raise another question, but I feel hesitant to raise it in the atmosphere which has been present in this House tonight. That was a question which no one has raised, about men who sponsor a child whom they truly believe to be their own child and are prepared to take responsibility for that child, and the DNA tests prove that they are not the father of the child. That happens, I am afraid, in families in every country. I do believe that judgment should be exercised, if the male sponsor truly believes the child to be his and he has taken responsibility for that child, and that that family should be allowed to be united and the children allowed to come here.

Ms. Short: Before the pilot study was launched, we were given firm undertakings by the Foreign Office that in those instances, which happen in villages in the Indian sub-continent and, I am sure, in the families of hon.

[Ms. Short]

Members, there would be honourable behaviour. We were assured that there would be privacy and the whole family would be allowed to come here. I hope that the Minister will reiterate the original assurance that we were given on that point.

Ms. Gordon: We have a very short time and I just want to raise one or two points about the changes in the new immigration rules, to get away from DNA testing, and to talk about how harshly the immigration rules are now being applied and how, strangely, people are often deported on the weekend when they cannot get hold of anybody to help them, and of how sometimes we appear to be cutting off our noses to spite our faces.

I had a frantic appeal from the headmaster of the Cubitt Town primary school about a valuable member of staff who was being told that she must leave because her original permit did not allow her to teach. I had to intervene and fortunately I got that teacher permission to stay; otherwise, another 30 children would have been without a teacher. Yesterday, Conservative Members did not seem too worried that there would be 1,000 children without teachers in Tower Hamlets. If the children had been the children of English middle-class parents they might have been concerned, but because they were the children of Bangladeshis they were not. Fortunately, that teacher was able to stay. If it had happened on a Friday or a Saturday, as in many other cases, she might have been bundled out of the country and those 30 children would not have had a teacher.

I had another case of a Nigerian, a student who had invested a great deal of time, effort and money into studying here. His allowance from Nigeria arrived late so he was late in re-registering. When the money came, he re-registered. Nevertheless, he was told to go and the immigration authorities would not hear any kind of appeal. What is the sense in that? He came here to study, and to take back the benefits of his knowledge to his own country. Why should he be forced to leave in the middle of his studies because of a technicality?

The last thing that I want to point out is the harshness meted out to some families who appeal against deportation orders hoping to win their case and are suddenly informed that their case is lost and are told they have to leave within a few days. No matter if they have children; they are given no time to inoculate them, no time to find somewhere for the children to live and no time to settle up their affairs in Britain. Nowadays, if one appeals on their behalf for an extension of time, one is frequently turned down.

I hope that the sort of changes that have taken place will be noted and that something will be done to ameliorate the position of those unfortunate people. Not only is it harmful and damaging to them, it is harmful and damaging to the reputation of this country, which once stood high as a country that had compassion, a country where people could find refuge and asylum. Now it is beginning to get a reputation for harshness, callousness and inhumanity.

9.31 pm

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Leeds, North-East): I am pleased to be able to make a contribution to this debate. I should like to pay tribute to all in my constituency, in the city of Leeds and in this country who are immigrants or the children or grandchildren of immigrants and who have contributed so largely to the success of Leeds and to the richness of this country. A great many immigrant families live in my constituency and in Leeds. From the highest to the most humble, they contribute at all levels of society. They do so willingly and extremely enthusiastically, and the community responds positively to them. That is the perspective in which race relations in this country today should be put.

I am sad about the Opposition motion because it seems so fatuous. It is contrived out of an attempt to whip up feelings—particularly among immigrant communities—which do not really exist. The leaders of ethnic minorities have told me that they believe it right that this country should have firm but fair immigration controls. Our changes in the rules will make those controls even fairer. Most people to whom I have spoken recognise and welcome that——

Ms. Short *rose*——

Mr. Kirkhope: I am not giving way, as I do not have much time.

I want first to refer to what I believe is a welcome easing of the rules on husbands of women admitted to the United Kingdom for employment. It is nonsensical for the system to work in one way but not in the other. I am delighted at the change because it will remove many of the difficulties that families here have experienced as a result of the imbalance in the way the system works.

So far, DNA testing has proved successful and, interestingly, where it has been used, 86 per cent. of the tests have proved the applicant's position. It is an important and useful test and I know that most of the ethnic minorities in my area welcome it. I am pleased to see that it will now be made available more generally, although it is to be on a voluntary and not an obligatory basis, and I am sure that many people will take it up.

There remains the issue of whether the tests should be subject to a charge. We have heard what the test might cost, and undoubtedly in some cases that will be a considerable disincentive to poorer people. I was therefore interested to hear what my hon. Friend the Minister said about the possibility of legal aid, or some similar form of funding, to assist with testing.

Ms. Short: It is already available for appeals.

Mr. Kirkhope: I welcome that.

Once there is an entitlement, if a test is taken and the results support the entitlement, there must be some financial responsibility. It is simple to say that the test must always be at the applicant's cost, and in general that is probably right, but in some cases it should be possible for some assistance to be given so that the test can be made and something can be proved which would otherwise be more difficult to prove to the authorities. I hope that something will be done about that aspect.

More than anything else, delays in receiving information about confirmation or even rejection of applications for visas cause difficulty to those who wish to come and have every good reason to do so. I often have to deal with delays. Inevitably, it is difficult to get information from overseas because communications are slow, but once the required information has been provided to our High Commissions we should do our best to avoid

delays and to arrange interviews speedily. If people are not to be given visas, it would be helpful all round if they could be told so speedily. They might accept not getting permission, but they would like to know the position as soon as possible.

Under this Government, immigration rules have always been both fair and firm. The changes will clearly make them even fairer in the eyes of any reasonable person. I therefore find the Opposition's attitude incomprehensible. They were responsible for the introduction of immigration rules when they were in Government because they realised that it was important, not just for the country but for the ethnic minorities, that there should be a limit on the numbers coming in. Now, in a hypocritical fashion which I find ridiculous, they are trying to make out that the Government's rules—which, if anything, ease the position and make it fairer—are somehow appalling and terrible. Their attitude is disgraceful and cynical, and unthinking about good race relations and our standing in the eyes of the world.

9.39 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Listening to the criticism by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) of the Opposition motion, I could not but be struck by the fact that one or two of his points entirely backed up our criticism of the Government's immigration rules and their announcement on DNA testing. I was also struck by his terminology. He referred to the "immigrants" in his constituency. We would all do well to remember that we are talking about the rights of British citizens. It matters not whether they are white or black; they are British citizens, and we must always bear that in mind.

We should also bear in mind that the Home Secretary is wrong to imply that we should either accept the Government's laws and rules or accept none at all. We are talking about the ways in which the Government's regulations and the immigration laws affect British citizens, and the central issue is the double-talk and double standards that the Government are applying when dealing with different British citizens. The leaked Home Office document bears that out. Referring to the timing of last week's announcement of the change in the immigration rules, it states:

"we see advantage in combining the two announcements"—

DNA and immigration rules—

"thus avoiding two separate rows about immigration issues in quick succession."

That tells us a good deal about the Government's attitude.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Darling: I do not have time to give way. The hon. Gentleman has not been here for most of the debate.

The Government talk about family unity, but when they are confronted with the spectacle of divided families it is an entirely different story. Asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) about the rights of those who can now prove their cases through DNA testing, the Prime Minister lashed out—not with the detailed and specific figures that we are used to hearing when she defends her Government's record on the NHS, but with wild figures of 40,000 or 50,000. The Home Secretary has told us tonight, however, that only about 8,000 people are involved.

Ms. Short: That is the maximum.

Mr. Darling: The Government have reluctantly introduced DNA testing because they know that there is no way around it. Applicants, however, still cannot choose DNA testing at the outset, and we are told that, instead of a simple bureaucratic barrier, a barrier both bureaucratic and financial is to be placed in the way of those who wish to prove that they are related to their mothers and fathers.

There has been more double-talk about financing the scheme. The Government say that no announcement has been made, and the Home Office memorandum makes it clear that the announcement will not say how it is to be financed. It states:

"The intention is to make a separate announcement on the funding arrangements shortly before the scheme comes into effect".

The scheme is due to come into effect in November. The Government say that they are only now starting dicussions with manufacturers and the rest, but it is abundantly clear that settlement fees will be introduced. I suspect that the announcement will be made when Parliament is not sitting so that we can avoid one of the nasty unpleasant little rows to which the memorandum refers.

Children are being separated from their parents because of the unfair attitude of immigration officers, yet no sympathy is to be shown to over-age applicants who can now prove that they have relatives here. The Government say that, provided they pass four hurdles, "compassion" can be exercised. The document, however, makes it abundantly clear that it is crucial to ensure that that concession remains the exception rather than the norm.

We can see the hardship that this will cause. Let me give an example. A sponsor had a wife and five children in Bangladesh. Four of the children were admitted; the youngest was refused admission because the immigration officer said that he did not believe the parents. In other words, he said, "You are lying; this boy is not your child." Can hon. Members imagine how they would feel if told that their children did not belong to them, and that they were making it up? This young child can prove the relationship: it has been proved by DNA testing. Nevertheless, he must reapply and his reapplication will not be considered until 1991. Then he may have to come up against the Home Secretary's "compassion", for the Home Secretary, if he is still in his post, will be holding the line rigorously.

That is what we are complaining about—the unfairness and the double standards. Such standards would never be applied if we were dealing with the children of white parents, or those of parents from a different country. They are being applied only to certain countries, mostly those on the Indian sub-continent. The Government's attitude is blatantly discriminatory, and I am sorry that the Home Secretary saw no problem in it. I am also sorry that he does not understand that most parents regard their children as their children whether or not they are over 18. Someone does not cease to be the child of his mother or father simply because he has passed his 18th birthday.

The memorandum makes it abundantly clear that, no matter what is said in public, in private the reality will be quite different and that compassion will be exercised very rarely—I suspect when a horror story hits the front pages of newspapers in order to buy off that problem.

The Home Secretary referred to the fact that the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) is Mr. Compassion himself. My hon. Friend the

[Mr. Darling]

Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) complained that he had sometimes had to wait for six weeks for a reply. Recently, I had to wait six months for a reply concerning one of my constituents who had been trying to come to this country to study at an Edinburgh college. Mr. Compassion will be unable to solve the problems of people who are wrongly refused entry to this country—people who are over the age of 18 now, but who know that they are related and who have proved their case. It is no wonder that divided families simply do not believe the Government when they claim that they are operating anything like a fair system.

It is the same story when one considers other aspects of the Government's immigration policy. It is interesting to note that the high moral ground is claimed both inside and outside the House when the position of people living in Hong Kong is considered. Those who claim that high moral ground ought to examine some of the other practices adopted by this country in connection with our immigration regulations. Reference has been made to wives who have been denied the right to be joined by their husbands because immigration officers did not believe that their marriages were genuine. After 1992, however, any EC citizen will be able to come to this country with his or her spouse without let or hindrance. Surely British citizens ought to have the same right, no matter which country their spouse comes from.

The same applies to student visas. The Home Secretary said in his memorandum that there had been cases of abuse, particularly in west Africa. Is he telling us that students from America and Australia do not abuse the system from time to time? Why is it that only an American visitor will be able to become a student without having to return to the United States to reapply for entry? A visitor from Bangladesh or west Africa will have to return home and reapply to become a student in this country. There is no justification for such a broad axe approach. It cannot possibly be said that people from one country are somehow pathologically likely to abuse the system, while people from another country will not do so. By its very nature, that is discriminatory.

The Government attempted to nobble the immigration tribunals. They did so quite blatantly, they were found out and it had to be stopped. The Home Secretary referred to our treatment of tourists and visitors to this country, yet if one goes to Heathrow on any day of the week one finds that when immigration officers interview passengers who have arrived here on a plane from New York their attitude is entirely different from the one that they adopt towards passengers who have arrived here on a plane from Dhaka. To begin with, people who arrive here from Dhaka tend to be referred to as immigrants, whereas people who arrive here from New York are referred to as visitors or tourists. I am afraid to say that such double standards are endemic. What is worse, they are enshrined within the immigration rules and regulations of this country.

Does the Home Secretary not realise the hardship that the visa regime causes when people come to this country because they wish to attend a wedding or a funeral? If such a policy were to be adopted towards visitors from the United States and other similar countries, it would not be tolerated. However, the Government are quite content to adopt such a policy in the case of visitors from the Indian sub-continent and certain African countries.

The Home Secretary suggested in his speech that the Opposition are trying to rake up trouble and prejudice. He should have listened to some of the speeches that have been made by Back Benchers on his own side of the House. We heard this evening a remarkable speech by the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes). When we discussed the immigration rules a few days ago, the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) made a speech that was racist, pure and simple. To give him credit, the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) said as much. However, the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex, did not say that. He thanked the hon. Member for Thurrock for his contribution but said that the hon. Gentleman had gone a little further than he yet wanted to go.

I hope that tonight the Minister of State will join his hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) and for Harrow, West in repudiating what was said by the hon. Members for Halesowen and Stourbridge and for Thurrock and make it clear that their attitudes and views form no part of this Government's policy—if that is the case. Perhaps someone should tell the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge that 250 million to 300 million people will be able to come to this country, if they wish to do so, after 1992 and that nobody will be able to do anything about it once the single European market is in place.

Let us not hear any talk about prejudice or any belittling of our motives in initiating the debate tonight. The Government must realise that the way in which the immigration rules strike at the rights of British citizens is intolerable. If we say that we live in a truly multiracial society, we must realise that all British citizens are entitled to fair treatment. The treatment that is meted out to some of our citizens simply would not be tolerated if it were happening to white people in Britain. The front pages would be full of outrage and Ministers would be standing at the Dispatch Box full of outrage, putting to right the rules that were found to cause offence. Yet that does not happen, despite the way in which the immigration rules are working.

To the Tories, families may be statistics and refugees may be unfortunate problems; but to the individuals involved, parents separated from their children and children who wish to look after infirm or aged parents, it is not a matter of statistics. It is a matter of decency that should concern everyone in the House. The Government simply do not realise that. Conservative candidates say all sorts of nice things and smile at constituents when they are wooing support before an election, but they should remember that the way in which the Government's rules and regulations operate cause a manifest injustice to British citizens in this country. If we are going to claim the moral high ground, the Government should start by accepting that mistakes have been made and injustices have been caused and must be put right if they are to claim to be a decent and humane Government.

9.51 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): We have had a useful debate, although we have just listened to a speech of extraordinary ignorance by the hon.

Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling). It was particularly wrong of him, as a lawyer, to make the comment that the Government had attempted to nobble the adjudicators. He knows that that is incorrect and has been answered in a parliamentary answer to him.

Mr. Darling: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Renton: I shall not give way as I have only nine minutes left. The hon. Gentleman should not make such comments.

Mr. Darling *rose*——

Mr. Renton: I must move on.

I want to thank my hon. Friends and all those who have taken part in the debate. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) for his tribute to the immigration service for the conscientiousness with which it implements decisions throughout the country and at our consulates abroad. Those decisions are taken by Ministers and by Parliament and the immigration service has a very difficult role to fulfill. In answer to my hon. Friend's concern about the delays in dealing with marriage cases, through the speeding up of the backlog—a constant wish of mine in the past two years—we have admitted an extra 1,200 spouses or fiancés into the country in the past 12 months. They got their entry clearance through the speeding up of the process.

All those changes in our procedures and determinations to speed them up were voted against by the Labour Opposition. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) was also concerned about that, and I must stress that, as a result of those changes, the backlog on immigration cases had fallen from about 75,000 to about 30,000, and I hope that it will fall further in the 12 months ahead. The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) should remember that every time he talks about the chaos at Lunar house. In the light of the changes that we have made and the dent that we are making in the backlog, I sincerely hope that soon—perhaps tonight—the hon. Gentleman will vote for rather than against our changes.

I share the concern expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) about racial harassment in our towns and cities. I note with great interest his comments about further recruitment of blacks and Asians into the police force. I know that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will agree with those sentiments and I hope that he will have a chance to pursue those remarks on a different occasion, perhaps in a debate about the police.

To my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes) I must say that I agree with his remark about Britain's generosity in admitting immigrants. That was a necessary concomitant to our imperial and colonial responsibilities, but immigrants have not come only from the Commonwealth —we have had large numbers of refugees from Vietnam, Chile, Uganda and Poland. Like my hon. Friend, I welcome the success of those immigrants, most of whom are now British citizens, and I wish them well in moving towards integration into our society.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East said that he was pleased that 86 per cent. of people who had recently taken the DNA test had passed it. In some measure, I am surprised that the figure was not 100 per cent. as they all volunteered to take the test. My hon. Friend should remember that. One would expect that if they volunteered to take the test they would all pass it. It is significant that so many have recently taken and passed the test.

Against that background, I completely reject the charges of double standards and injustice in our treatment of the DNA process. I reject the comments by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central that we reluctantly introduced DNA testing. The reverse is true. The Labour party should occasionally listen rather than utter its traditional cries of racism, bias and double standards. Over the past month, we have accepted the results of hundreds of DNA tests.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Renton: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. He had an Adjournment debate on the subject last week, and I have nothing to add. We have accepted the results of the test——

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of State has four minutes left to tell hon. Members what they most want to know. How will the DNA scheme be paid for?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister——

Mr. Madden: Will he——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister will not have a chance to do that.

Mr. Renton: I was about to reply to that point. As I said in answer to the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), we do not propose that the cost should be borne by the taxpayer. We intend exactly the opposite—that the cost should be spread between the generality of applicants for entry clearance. We are working out with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office a proper means of achieving that and, as I said in the debate two weeks ago, we are discussing the cost with the companies involved. As soon as we have reached a decision, an announcement will be made to the House.

I was surprised when the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) so firmly said that he intended to abolish the primary purpose test. He well knows that that test was introduced by the Labour Government in 1978 and that it was aimed against marriages of convenience. Why did the Labour Goverment introduce it? It was aimed against plain abuse of marriage for immigration purposes.

Mr. Short: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) was probably working in the Home Office at the time and will know precisely why the Labour Government introduced it. They introduced it to stop abuse.

Ms. Short: That is a totally different matter.

Mr. Renton: We subsequently introduced——

Ms. Short *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One at a time.

Mr. Renton: The primary purpose test was introduced to ensure that marriage was not used as a means of obtaining settlement in this country.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook, with one of his big gestures——

Ms. Short: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister referred to me personally but did not give way. Is that not against all the conventions of the House?

Mr. Speaker: It is up to the Minister whether he gives way or not.

Mr. Renton: The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said, with one of those big gestures that he tends to make in debates, that the primary purpose test keeps out 12 people for every one that it lets in.

Mr. Hattersley *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Renton: That is exactly what the right hon. Gentleman said. I took a note as he was speaking, and it will appear in *Hansard* tomorrow.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Renton: I will not give way. That means that, using last year's statistics, the right hon. Gentleman would be suggesting that about 90,000 spouses and fiancés came in one year from the Indian sub-continent alone. It is just that sort of reality that the Opposition could not fulfil. In government they would run away from the policies that they proclaim in opposition.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 182, Noes 249.

Division No. 281] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes, and
Mr. Allen Adams.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr

Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House commends the Government's determination to operate an immigration policy which is both firm and fair, as evidenced by their new amended and consolidated immigration rules; and welcomes the Government's announcement on the use of DNA testing in immigration cases.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Representation of the People Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. —*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Orders of the Day

Representation of the People Bill

Considered in Committee.

[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

EXTENSION OF PERMITTED PERIOD OF OVERSEAS RESIDENCE

10.14 pm

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): We now come to amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 10, leave out 'twenty-five' and insert 'fifteen'.

With this we may also discuss the following amendments: No. 4.

No. 7, in page 1, line 10, leave out 'twenty-five years' and insert 'ten'.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 1, line 10, leave out 'twenty-five' and insert 'twenty'.

I could not be present in the Chamber for Second Reading last week. However, perhaps I can make it clear that the Opposition do not oppose the Bill in principle. We see that there is an argument for extending the time after which a voter may vote in elections in the country, but we do not believe that 25 years is justified.

We believe that a period of five years was unduly restrictive, especially as it is now clear that a number of people will leave this country perhaps to take up work in Europe or in other parts of the world but will still maintain a lively interest in the affairs of this country.

This Bill received its First Reading two days after the Conservatives had been humiliated in the European elections. My first reaction to the Bill was to think that the Government must be desperate if they were trying to rope in people who left the country up to 25 years ago. However, having considered the matter, especially in the light of my experience and that of some of my hon. Friends, it is clear that many overseas votes go to Labour as well as to other parties. The fears that were expressed initially that all overseas voters were somehow going to support the Government, are unjustified. Many people who have left this country to work abroad realise the damage that the Government are doing to this country. They are more than happy to vote for the Labour party to see this Government removed from office. I have no fears that by allowing an extension of the franchise in this way there will somehow be more votes for the Conservatives. I suspect that just as the mood is changing among voters resident in the United Kingdom, so those working and living abroad and reading reports of what is happening in this country will realise that it is time for a change and vote for the Labour party.

In that spirit, I have moved amendment No. 4 which will allow a person to vote for up to 20 years after having been included on an electoral register. I believe that 20 years is a sensible compromise but that 25 years is going a little too far and catering for people who have well and truly left this country and are unlikely to return. If the Government are prepared to accept the amendment, our opposition to this clause and the associated clauses can be somewhat curtailed. Perhaps we could deal with the other matters as and when we reach them.

The Chairman: I owe an apology to the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller). I ask his pardon and call him to speak to amendment No. 1.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Thank you, Mr. Walker.

During the Second Reading debate my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department put forward persuasive arguments for extending the existing period of five years during which British citizens abroad may continue to vote in our elections. I would certainly not disagree with those arguments. In suggesting that 25 years is too long, however, I wish to make a particular point which was apparently missed by all who spoke on Second Reading and was missed today by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling).

In various democratic countries which do not have parliamentary systems, electors vote for a Government on a national basis. In Britain there is no national constituency in that sense. Our theory of representative democracy requires people to vote for a Member of Parliament in a constituency which happens to have on average about 65,000 electors. Within this country there is a degree of mobility which in certain areas such as inner London is very high indeed. There is a rapid turnover of electors from one register to the next.

Most people who spend any length of time abroad retain links with this country, and if they take the trouble to register to vote we may assume that those links are reasonably close. However, we cannot assume that their links with a particular area will remain equally close. If, as is likely, they have relatives in this country, those relatives are likely to move several times in a period of 25 years and very probably into a different constituency. After a number of years, it is perhaps much more likely than not that if those overseas had to nominate where it would be most appropriate for them to vote, it would be somewhere quite different from the place where they lived or voted all those years before. After 25 years, their link with the place that they left could be extremely tenuous.

In the case of someone who, perhaps, lived somewhere only as a child before moving abroad and whose parents or guardians have moved a dozen times since, it would be nonsense to expect them to vote for candidates in a constituency that they may not have visited since and may not even remember. It is not practicable to give overseas electors a vote in a constituency other than the one in which they last registered or in which their parents or guardians were registered. I agree with the Government's decision to enfranchise those people as the only practical solution, but nobody would dream of enfranchising any other group by allowing them to vote where they happened to be resident on a certain day up to 25 years ago.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): France, the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Australia and the United States all have territorial representation. People can continue to register, although in many cases they left more than 25 years ago.

Mr. Waller: I happen to think that our form of parliamentary democracy is rather better than some of

those that my hon. Friend mentioned. Just because they do things in a certain way does not mean that we should necessarily follow them.

An offensive extension of our system of representative democracy, which relies on constituencies, becomes intrinsically more offensive the longer the period is. There can be no objective way of determining how long the period should be, but if 25 years is considered right to denote a continuing link with this country—I should be prepared to accept that—one might consider 15 years appropriate to denote a link with a certain constituency. For those reasons, I have opted for 15 years.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): In a spirit of generosity, I tabled an amendment specifying 10 years. On reflection, I was probably a little too generous. I am sure that the Minister will be grateful for that and will accept my amendment. Twenty-five years is excessive in the extreme. People who have been resident abroad, working abroad, earning money abroad and probably not paying taxes abroad are not likely to be interested in politics in this country. The Government's motive is to find a pool of voting fodder for the Tory party in the tax havens around the world.

No doubt the Comptroller of Her Majesty's Household, the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) will shortly be sent to the Cayman Islands to search out a few Tory votes. No doubt the Minister, the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), will be off to Marbella to look around tax exiles there, and hold a few cocktail parties on behalf of the Tory party. Those cocktail parties would not be subject to the election expenses limit because it does not apply to advertising for voters overseas, any more than advertising in various newspapers such as *Le Monde*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, or the international version of *El Pais*, or on Sky television or any other satellite system would be subject to election expenses.

It is nonsense to enfranchise people who have lived abroad for 25 years. The Government should be concentrating on large numbers of people in this country who have been disfranchised because their landlords have chosen not to put them on the electoral register, because their local registration offices are so incompetent that they do not do their job efficiently, and because of insufficient canvassing and advertising about the need to register to vote.

The proposal is that anyone who was born in this country can vote for as long as 25 years later. That means that a child who is born today, who gets a passport straight away and whose parents take him out of the country, will have a vote in British elections in 18 years' time and for a further seven years after that. That young person would have no conception of political life, or of what happens in this country. He would be given a vote, but he would not be expected to play any part in public or private life in this country. I believe that the clause is merely to enfranchise tax dodgers around the world. If there were any other motive behind the clause, the Government would be attempting to improve democracy in this country.

The Government say that they are keen on promoting democracy. That is suspicious coming from a party that has introduced the poll tax, which has done more to discourage people from voting than anything else, and from a party that has done nothing to extend the franchise to those hundreds of thousands—if not millions—of people across Europe who are legally resident in this country, are paying taxes in this country and are playing their part in community life, but who are denied the right to vote. They are denied, too, the right to vote in their own countries, because they are refugees or asylum seekers. We should be concentrating on improving democracy for people who live in this country and who contribute to this country rather than this curious——

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I was interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's concerns about improving democracy. Will he tell the House what contributions the Labour party proposes to make to improving democracy in Britain today?

The Chairman: Order. I hope that the debate will be confined to the amendments on the Paper.

Mr. Corbyn: The amendment on the Paper is designed to limit the damage of the proposal. As I have said, I have been far too generous in proposing 10 years, and I chastise myself for that.

As the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) knows, if he bothers to read Labour party documents or anything else, we are concerned about democracy in the community, at work and in elections. That is why we intend to abolish the poll tax. We also support industrial democracy. Of course, I would be straying and trying your patience, Mr. Walker, if I went in that direction. The hon. Gentleman could have tabled his own amendments to the Bill. I notice that the Social and Liberal Democrats—if that is still his party's name—has not tabled any amendments, so I fail to see why its members are taking a holier than thou attitude in this debate. *[Interruption.]* Under my skin, not at all. The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has an awful lot of problems under his skin, but one of them has nothing to do with me. The problem is the lack of support for his party and perhaps he should address himself to that.

The Bill is not a method of improving democracy, but nothing more than a method of enfranchising people who play no part in the life of the country. They are not interested in democratic movements in this country, because they have set themselves up in some other country and earn their money there. My 10-year rule would allow those people who have working contracts abroad—for example, those in the diplomatic service—to maintain a link with this country. I believe that a period of 25 years is quite ridiculous and, therefore, I commend my amendment to the House.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: It is extraordinary to listen, on the one hand, to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) describing these people as tax dodgers and, on the other, to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling)—speaking from the Opposition Front Bench—saying that the Labour party is receiving increasing support from British citizens abroad. The hon. Member for Islington, North must in some way reconcile those two points of view. The abuse heaped on our citizens abroad is entirely unjustified. Many of them are Crown servants and local government employees who pay British tax deducted at source, and others are scarcely tax dodgers—otherwise, they would not live in countries where the tax rates are frequently higher than they are here.

We have listened to a number of suggestions for different periods, but they have, of course, all been plucked

[Mr. Robert B. Jones]

from the air—just as much my right hon. Friend the Minister's proposal of 25 years as those we have heard of 10, 15 and 20 years. The truth is that large numbers of people work abroad and maintain links with the United Kingdom regardless of how long they have been out of the country. I was especially struck when I was last in the middle east by a British sales representative of a company in my constituency who had been working there for 30 years. He had continued to take his local papers every week in order to keep a watch on what was going on in his home town.

I am sure that many hon. Members have met people abroad who share that link with the home country. If there were to be any restriction, it would be more appropriate if it were related to those working overseas as opposed to those retired overseas, irrespective of the time limit. That is why I should prefer to see no limit.

When my hon. Friend the Minister replies to this short debate, I hope that he will bear in mind the fact that, if representations are made about any unsatisfactory features of the system, the legislation can be reconsidered to ensure that we are not unjustifiably disfranchising many of our fellow citizens. We are in an era, I hope, of increasing internationalism, and what is good for the majority of the countries in the EC and other democracies should surely be good enough for us. The internationalism of the Labour party, which lasted until 15 June, has been represented by the hon. Member for Islington, North, when he categorised all our citizens abroad as tax dodgers. Incidentally, that is an improvement on what he said about them only the other day. I hope that that sort of sentiment will not be expressed again, because it is monstrously unjustified.

10.30 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): It has sometimes been observed that as people grow older so they become more reactionary in their political views. It may be fairly observed of the Labour party that as it has grown older so it has become more reactionary. The debate has illustrated the falling off that has taken place in the radicalism of the Labour party. In the debates which have taken place so far on the Bill, it has sought to restrict the franchise of British citizens, having spent the first 50 years of its life trying to extend it. The amendment moved by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) is an example of just such an attempt.

It is bizarre that, following the proposition that was introduced on Second Reading that there should be a property qualification or a tax connection with the United Kingdom—that was the argument of those on the Opposition Front Bench—it is now being argued that we should reduce the right of British citizens to vote in British general elections.

Mr. Darling: On what basis does the hon. Gentleman make his remarks? At present, the franchise includes only those who are away for five years, and the amendment would increase that to 20 years, which is five years less than the period which the Government are proposing. I never suggested any property qualification or the qualification that the individual should pay taxes. That is not the right basis on which anyone should be franchised. The hon. Gentleman should listen to what I say rather than speak on the basis of what he wished I had said.

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Gentleman began his speech by admitting that he had not been present on Second Reading. Had he been present, he would have heard the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) suggesting that there should be a tax nexus. He proposed that that should be the test to determine whether individuals were entitled to vote. The hon. Gentleman may not regard it as especially reactionary to seek to reduce the entitlement proposed by the Government from 25 years to 20 years, but I think most fair-minded people would regard that as a restriction of the franchise.

The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) was right when he said that to pluck figures out of the air is wholly arbitrary. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central produced not one argument of substance to suggest that he had it any more right than the Government. At least the Home Seceretary had the grace to say that he was attracted to the idea of extending the franchise to citizens regardless of where they lived. In so doing, he reflected what I believe to be the common perception, that communications in the modern world are such that information about the country to which one belongs and of which one is a citizen is readily available regardless of residence.

It is widely recognised also that the overwhelming majority of British citizens who lived abroad are not, as caricatured by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), layabouts, lacking in patriotism or sponging parasites of the societies in which they live. Instead, they are hard-working people who, in many cases, are serving the countries in which they live specifically and directly as civil servants or soldiers, or as members of the commercial world. The idea that these people should be deprived of their citizenship rights to vote because they are living abroad seems reactionary, and unworthy of a party which claims to be radical.

I hope that the Government have not cooked up a deal with the Labour party over this measure, but I suspect that that is just what has happened. Having put forward the idea of 25 years in the Bill, I suspect that the Government will accept some slight adjustment in order to convey to the British people the idea that there is consensus on this matter. Let me disabuse them of that idea: there is no consensus. The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West has made it plain that the true principle should be that of giving the citizen the right to vote, regardless of residence, proved connection and demonstrated patriotism. How many people in this country would survive a test of patriotism if such a test had to be applied before they were granted the right to vote?

The Bill moves in the right direction, but not far enough. I wish that the Home Secretary had followed his first instincts, and conveyed the right to vote to all those who, by citizenship, enjoy British nationality.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I am grateful for the opportunity to catch your eye, Mr. Walker. On Second Reading I tried to protest about remarks made by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who castigated all expatriate workers as the equivalent of Ronnie Biggs. Unfortunately, on that occasion, I failed to make my point, but I shall do so this evening, not only by

welcoming the Government's measure—it is unusual for me to speak in favour of a Government measure—but also by speaking against the various different chances——

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Allason: I shall give way in a minute, when I have developed my point.

I should like to speak against the various different chances for reducing the number of years from 25 to 10 or even 15. It is important that the figure should be 25, and I shall give the House an example of somebody who would be absolutely disfranchised.

For example, an expatriate worker may go to live abroad, but just because, for tax purposes, he opts to become a non-resident in this country—that is, he spends a year and a day abroad and thereafter spends less than 90 days in this country—he will not pay tax in this country but, even though a non-resident, he will not necessarily be exempt from tax elsewhere. If he went to live in the United States, he would pay tax there.

The argument of Labour Members seems to be one of double taxation. They seem to present all non-resident workers as tax dodgers, which is not the case.

Mr. Corbyn: In defence of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West, (Mr. Banks), who is, I understand, abroad—not, I hasten to add, in some tax haven—he said that the measure would enfranchise Ronnie Biggs, which is perfectly true. He also said that it would enfranchise a large number of tax dodgers, which is perfectly true. He did not say, and neither have I ever ever said, that every British person who lives abroad is either a crook or a tax dodger. I want to place that on record, so that what was and was not said is clear.

Mr. Allason: I am grateful to have that point clarified and I hope that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West enjoys his stay abroad, wherever it may be, and does not have to pay any tax. However, while he is there he may well notice that, if the so-called tax haven is an island, the cost of living is substantially higher than that of this country, and even in a tax haven, he may be obliged to pay other sorts of taxes. In many countries where there is no income tax, for example, there is a very——

The Chairman: Order. I advise the hon. Gentleman to come back more closely to the specific amendment before the Committee.

Mr. Allason: I am grateful for your guidance, Mr. Walker.

I speak in favour of the 25-year limit. It is a reasonable limit. Supposing an expatriate worker goes abroad and lives there. He may well retain a property in this country and come back here once every six months or so. He may let out the property. More importantly, even if he remains out of the country for 25 years, that does not mean that he will automatically become eligible to vote in his new country. Because children may retain their British nationality and their links with the United Kingdom and may be educated here, it is important that their parents have an opportunity to vote. They should not be disfranchised; they should be able to take part in the democratic system and to vote for a Government when that moment comes.

Accordingly, 25 years is a sensible period. It will mean that the children of someone who has taken work abroad will still have the chance to choose, so I commend the 25-year limit to the House.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): No one would want to remove the right to vote of a person who has gone abroad on a contract, or who serves in the armed forces or in the EEC. However, many of us oppose extending the time limit for those who have been away from this country for a long time, many of whom exhibit no commitment to return. Five years is the maximum permitted under the present law, and a declaration has to be signed. In it, the person states that he will return to the United Kingdom at some stage. This Bill would abolish that.

I can see no justification for such an extension. As the Bill has been given a Second Reading, I shall support the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), which provides for an extension to 10 years. As he said, perhaps, on reflection, he should have sought a smaller number of years, but I shall support his amendment as the best available option.

I shall accept no lectures from the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) about being an anti-democrat. I am all in favour of democracy. Had I been around at the time, I, unlike some Conservative Members, would have fought to extend the right to vote and for other democratic reforms. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I require no lectures on defending our democracy. Far from defending our democracy, the Government proposal devalues it because it gives the vote to people who have lived away from this country for years on end, who have no commitment to it and who have no intention of paying tax here. As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North said, many of the children of parents who took them away and never returned will have the right to vote. I cannot see how that helps democracy.

Unlike the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, I know full well why the Government are proposing this change: they believe that it will bring them votes. If they thought otherwise, they would not suggest it. It is naive of the Liberals, or Democrats, to believe that the Government have any objective other than garnering as many votes as possible. It surprises me that there should be any illusions about that.

The amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North is better than the one tabled by my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench, and it deserves support.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Walker. When we began the debate on this group of amendments, you announced the selection of amendments Nos. 1, 4 and 7 for debate, but they were mentioned in the order of amendments Nos. 4, 1 and 7. I should like some guidance, because the amendments refer to different numbers of years—20, 15 and 10 years. Will there be an opportunity to vote on all three of them, so that the Committee has a say about all three options, or will you be selecting one for a vote, so that we do not vote on the other two?

The Chairman: At the conclusion of the debate, I shall put the question that is before the Committee, which is that on amendment No. 4. If the Committee agree to that amendment, such a decision will relieve it of the necessity of voting on the other two amendments in the group.

10.45 pm

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Walker. I understand what you say. However, the selection list has amendment No. 1 down first, with amendments Nos. 4 and 7 after it. After my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) moved amendment No. 4, you asked the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) to move amendment No. 1, and apologised to him for not calling him first.

The Chairman: Order. I called the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) not to move his amendment, but to speak to it. It may have been an inadvertence on my part, but I failed to see the hon. Gentleman rising at the outset of the debate, so I called the hon. Member whom I saw rising, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling). For that reason, it will be amendment No. 4 that I shall have, I hope soon, the opportunity to put to the Committee.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston) *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I hope that the hon. Lady will let me deal with one point of order before she raises another.

In the light of the decision that the Committee takes, we shall decide whether it is necessary to vote on any other amendments in the group.

Mrs. Wise: Further to that point of order, Mr. Walker. It is not at all clear why you failed to call the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), who tabled the first amendment in the group. Having apologised for failing to call him, you have implicitly admitted that the hon. Member was entitled to be called first. What is at stake is not simply the order of speeches but the right of the Committee to cast votes. Therefore, will you reconsider, as it was apparently an accident that you did not call amendment No. 4 first, and say that that should not be the determining factor as to whether we vote on amendment No. 4?

The Chairman: The hon. Lady is getting dangerously near to debating my ruling, and I am not prepared to allow that. I have ruled, and I see no reason to change my ruling.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Our debate is not about something of minor significance. On Second Reading, the Minister said that the Bill would enfranchise up to 2 million people. We cannot decently decide who should have the vote on the principle of who will get political advantage from that vote. That is what is behind the Government's proposals, and I was disappointed by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) who said, perhaps in a jocular way, that it was all right to enfranchise people living overseas because they would vote Labour. We should be extending the franchise only to those who have a legitimate right to that franchise, and who form part of the society that should have a say in the decisions of, and operate checks and balances over, its political representatives. Therefore, those who are resident here, have close links with us or are returning here, rather than detaching themselves from it, have a right to vote in it.

Many people who live overseas may be worthy, although others will be tax dodgers, but that factor should not enter the argument. On the whole, people will increasingly associate themselves with the societies to which they have moved. They will read newspapers and watch television there and follow the careers of their children, who will help to change their attitudes. They will become detached from our society, feeling a secondary rather than a direct sense of involvement with what is, to them, merely their country of origin. Many people here will, of course, adopt a similar attitude, but at least the social conditions which surround them will draw them increasingly into our society and justify their having the vote.

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Gentleman is making a thoughtful speech. Does he not agree, however, that a British citizen's retention of his citizenship is an indication of his desire to retain the link that allows him to receive the protection of the British Government and to carry a British passport? Is not that in itself a more objective test than any other of the connection of people living abroad with this country?

Mr. Barnes: Such people may wish to demonstate their link with this country. My argument, however, is that the way of life that they are leading abroad and the society that surrounds them will change their attitudes considerably, and that their connection with this country —their attachment to it—will become merely legalistic. In the past we have talked of extending the franchise to people who belong to our society—who are resident here, and who become increasingly involved in what happens here and what they wish to happen. Although the hon. Gentleman has a point, I think that it is countered by other factors.

Before I gave way to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), I was about to voice a considerable criticism of something that he has said. I take offence at the suggestion that some Opposition Members are not genuinely concerned about the legitimate extension of the franchise. I have presented a Bill to bring about the re-enfranchisement of the people, because I am especially concerned about the way in which the poll tax, because of the interconnection with the electoral register, will help to destroy the franchise.

I have argued strongly for the extension and nurture of the franchise in this country. For instance, we spend a tiny amount on encouraging electoral registration. Last year Abbey National spent more than £6 million encouraging people to vote in one of its ballots, while the nation spent only £320,000 encouraging them to take up their franchise rights. That contrasts with the amount—more than £3,500,000—which could be spent for that purpose under the Bill.

Mr. Corbyn: Is my hon. Friend aware that, according to the law of this country, everyone who is eligible to vote must be included on the electoral register? That is the responsibility of each householder, but hardly anyone—if anyone at all—is ever prosecuted for deliberately keeping people off the register. Should not the Government be attending to that problem?

The Chairman: Order. I think that the Committee should get back to the amendments.

Mr. Barnes: It is clear from what I have said that I support a move to include on the register as few overseas residents as possible—only those who have been in contact with this country recently. The initial five-year period established by the Representation of the People Act 1985 is, in my view, preferable to any of the current proposals. During consideration of the Bill in 1984, a seven-year

period was proposed, but there was a furore and a great debate—that Parliament concentrated on the issue much more closely than this one—and the Government made a concession, cutting it down to five years. They have now gaily advanced it to 25 years. I find 20 years better than 25, 15 better than 20, 10 better than 15, and five would be the best of all if we cannot return to what happened before 1984.

Other consequences follow from a determination of the number of years that a child has to spend in this country to be enfranchised. That point will be dealt with later but it will be affected by the decision on this amendment. Someone who is now a babe in arms will be entitled to a vote at the age of 18, having lived all his life overseas and he will retain that right for seven years, although he may be voting in a constituency which did not exist when he was a babe in arms and he may know nothing about conditions in this country.

Mr. Allason: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that children who move abroad with their parents, or who were born abroad, may never have the right to vote in their parents' new country and may wish to retain their links with the United Kingdom? Their parents may return frequently to this country. If a limit of five or even 10 years were imposed, those children might be disfranchised.

Mr. Barnes: We cannot determine who should be enfranchised in this country by means of any global idea of what the franchise arrangements should be. A child may be living in a country where there is no franchise, so even if he became a naturalised citizen of that country he could never exercise his franchisé rights. We used to have a parliamentary democracy with decent checks and balances. We have to decide who can rightly be enfranchised. If we get it right, we shall then be able to argue that the principles that we adopt ought to be adopted by other countries.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I apologise to the Committee for the fact that early on in the debate I was called out of the Chamber for five or 10 minutes. During that period I understand that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) referred to the Second Reading debate which touched on the amendments before the Committee. I understand that the hon. Gentleman repeated a point that he made during that debate—that I had said that Labour party policy is that people should have property before they are allowed to vote. That is completely contrary to our policy.

During the Second Reading debate I said:

"Does the Minister consider that, for many of the tax exiles"—

the issue was tax exiles, in the context of the 25 years argument—

"who have given up Britain to live overseas—there should be no representation without taxation? If these tax exiles pay tax they should, by right, have a vote. Does not the Minister agree that this is a reasonable criterion for extending the representation of these people?"—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1989; Vol. 155, c. 1146.]

The reason for making the point in that debate was that in 1985 the Minister advocated the same point. I was making a debating point rather than suggesting in any way that Labour party policy is that people should not have the vote if they do not own property. That would be quite absurd.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The basic proposition from which I start, and which I commend to the Committee, is that one should not deprive a British citizen of his vote unless there are very persuasive arguments to that effect. That must be especially true at a time when more and more people are working for longer and longer periods abroad in a multiplicity of jobs, many of them of direct benefit to this country. To say, as the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has said, that the Bill is designed to benefit tax dodgers, crooks, thieves and wastrels is to bring discredit only upon himself.

I shall make two further points in support of the general proposition that I have advanced. First, while it may be true that the Bill would extend the franchise to a number of people who might be described as tax dodgers and perhaps thus unworthy, the fact that a number of unworthy people benefit from an extension of the franchise is not and can never be an argument against extending the franchise to the many more numerous people working abroad for wholly good reasons.

Secondly, the Bill proposes a self-regulating mechanism. It is no good criticising the Bill on the grounds that it will extend the franchise to people who have no interest in voting. If they have no interest in voting, they will not apply to register.

11 pm

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister appears to be proposing a duality of standards, in that voter registration is compulsory for people living in Britain, but it will be optional to people living abroad who are offered the vote. Does the Minister agree that there is an inconsistency?

Mr. Hogg: No. The approach that Parliament has always taken is not to impose obligations which are unenforceable. As we cannot enforce against persons living abroad an obligation to register, we cannot impose one to that effect.

The House has to consider four possible time periods. The Bill provides for 25 years; amendment No. 4, moved by the Opposition, provides for 20 years; a further amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) provides for 15 years; and the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Islington, North provides for 10 years.

Judged against the general proposition which I have set out, the amendments proposing 10 and 15 years are too short. Neither 10 nor 15 years would be appropriate, bearing in mind that the general principle must be that British citizens have the vote unless there is some jolly good reason to the contrary. That leaves a choice between 20 and 25 years. I am perfectly willing to concede that, in a sense, we are plucking figures out of the air, and it is difficult to say that there is a distinction of principle between 20 and 25 years. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) has described his amendment No. 4, which proposes 20 years, as a sensible compromise. In electoral matters, there is much to be said for attracting as much support as possible around a particular proposal for change, and because of that I recommend to the Committee that amendment No. 4 be accepted.

Mr. Winnick: I can assure the Minister that there will be a vote. Whatever concession he makes, it will not be

[Mr. Winnick]

enough for some of us. Will he explain why the declaration is to be abolished? Although I would remain opposed to the Bill, if the declaration were retained, at least there would be some commitment which a person now has to sign to vote in a British general election. Will the Minister consider that at some stage? It is important, at least theoretically, that in signing a declaration, a person should be placed under some obligation that he intends to return to Britain at some stage.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is attentive but forgetful. He will recall that I dealt with that point when I replied to the Second Reading debate. We may not agree, but the declaration is unverifiable. There is no way in which an independent person can judge whether a person making the declaration is telling the truth. Therefore, it is intrinsically valueless. Because the law does not favour incorporating into statute law valueless requirements, I certainly would not commend the hon. Gentleman's proposition to the Committee.

Mr. Winnick: The declaration was included by the Government. I recognise the shortcomings that the Minister just mentioned, but at least it places the person under an obligation of honesty. I have many reservations about the Bill, but bearing in mind that the declaration was included by the Government, what are the arguments for abolishing it?

Mr. Hogg: If the hon. Gentleman had thought a little more clearly about his intervention, he would be aware of the reason. He referred to the declaration about honesty, which in effect says that the person has no intention of living permanently outside the United Kingdom. Nobody can answer that question with certainty one way or the other, because he must admit the possibility that he might change his mind. That being so, he cannot assert the declaration with a clear conscience. Because of that, and because it is unverifiable, I do not commend it to the Committee.

The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) received echoed support from the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). In effect, my hon. Friend was asking whether we should reconsider the figure. The truth is that the Government would be content to accept a period of 20 years, against the background that I have outlined. We do not propose to bring further proposals before the House in the future. Clearly, if there were general, substantial support to extend the franchise, we should have to reconsider the matter. At present, I commend amendment No. 4 to the Committee.

Mr. Maclennan: I predicted that there would be collusion between the Front Benches. As on so many other matters, they have joined in reaction and lack of principle. The Minister could not embellish the lack of principle of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), who adduced no argument of substance, or indeed any argument, for advocating 20 years as the appropriate time. Even with his more inventive mind, the Minister could not produce an argument of substance.

Not only the Committee but the country will note that collusion and lack of principle and the rejection of the powerful arguments of Conservative Members. It will be noted how the Government and the Opposition have been prepared to cut down the proposed right to extend the franchise to British citizens regardless of where they live and work. It is a sad commentary on the way in which Parliament operates.

Question put, That the amendment be made;—

The Committee divided: Ayes 144, Noes 27.

Division No. 282] **[11.07 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Callaghan, Jim
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haynes, Frank
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McAvoy, Thomas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Meale, Alan
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Randall, Stuart
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Speller, Tony
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaz, Keith
Waller, Gary
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*

Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alton, David
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clay, Bob
Cryer, Bob
Gordon, Mildred
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Livsey, Richard
Loyden, Eddie
Maclennan, Robert
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wallace, James
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the clause, as amended, stand part of the Bill.

11.15 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): As a result of the way in which the amendments have been called—and I make no criticism—the only way in which an alternative view can be expressed is by speaking against clause 1 standing part of the Bill.

I am one of those—and there must be others—who are anxious when the two Front Benches agree because the usual channels can become too easy a form of contact. However, when the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) speaks about democracy, it is right to put it on record that he was elected as a Labour candidate in the 1979 election and that the ballot paper said "Labour". When the hon. Gentleman deserted the Labour party, he tore up every ballot that was cast for him and served under another label for the rest of that Parliament. Therefore, I do not find it easy to take lectures from him on the subject of ballots.

However, I want to make the more substantial point that our parliamentary system rests on a constituency basis. We refer to, for example, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield, or to the right hon. Members for Old Bexley and Sidcup and for Finchley or whatever the constituency may be. Under this arrangement it is possible that several constituencies in which there is a narrow vote one way or the other might elect their Members of Parliament on the votes of those who have not lived in this country for 20 years. That is a substantial change.

When the franchise was extended in the 19th century, the concept of passports did not exist. The only meaning of "citizenship" was where one lived and worked. We are now departing from that. There are millions of people who create the wealth in this country and who have no vote but, as one Conservative Member has said, if one holds property here, one is entitled to vote. By making this change, we are shifting the idea of citizenship from those who have a commitment to the future of the country because they live and work here, to those who have property in this country but who live and work elsewhere. That is a substantial change.

The poll tax has altered the basis of the vote because everybody who is on the register will be pursued for the poll tax—[HON. MEMBERS: "Community charge."] Those who live abroad will not be pursued for the poll tax. Indeed, it is called the poll tax because it is a tax attaching to those who are on the register—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I know that there will be others who pay the poll tax who will not be on the register, but nobody on the register will be able to escape the poll tax. Of course, people such as foreign residents living here will pay the poll tax.

Finally, the 20-year rule is retrospective. What about young people of 16 who pay taxation, who are at work and who have an interest in the next 20 years in this country because they live here, but who are not to be enfranchised?

I do not know whether the House will seek to proceed to another Division, but for those reasons, in my speech and in my voice, I wish to register my opposition to clause 1 standing part of the Bill. This is a big change and the fact that an agreement has been reached between the two Front Benches should not recommend itself to those who see the basis of our vote as constituency representation. Those who live and work in a constituency should have primacy in electoral representation over those who live abroad for whatever reasons. I make no charge against those who live abroad because they may have good reason to do so—but they have no direct commitment to, nor do they create wealth in, the society where they claim that they should have a vote.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is true that the parliamentary system rests on a constituency basis. It is also true that by "democracy" we mean extending the franchise to adult citizens. Sometimes those things can come into conflict. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) takes a narrow view in saying that people living overseas should not have a vote in a constituency where they have not resided for some time. That is incompatible with the view of a democratic society that I am putting forward. Because of that approach and that difference in interpretation, I advise the Committee to reject what the right hon. Gentleman has said.

Question put, That the clause, as amended, stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 143, Noes 16.

Division No. 283] **[11.23 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan

Gill, Christopher
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
McAvoy, Thomas
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Randall, Stuart
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Speller, Tony
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Clay, Bob
Corbyn, Jeremy
Gordon, Mildred
Loyden, Eddie
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Nellist, Dave
Primarolo, Dawn
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Vaz, Keith
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Clause 1, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

EXTENSION TO THOSE NOT PREVIOUSLY REGISTERED IN UNITED KINGDOM BECAUSE OF AGE

11.30 pm

The Chairman: We now come to amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 16, leave out 'twenty-five' and insert 'fifteen'.

Mr. Waller: In the light of the reasonable decision on amendment No. 4, and because this amendment is closely related to it and it would be illogical to have a different figure, I do not seek to move the amendment.

The Chairman: In that case, I call upon the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) to move the next amendment in the group.

Mr. Darling: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 1, line 16, leave out 'twenty-five' and insert 'twenty'.

The Chairman: With this, we will take the rest of the amendments in this group: No. 8 in, page 1, line 16, leave out 'twenty-five' and insert 'ten'.

No. 3, in page 2, line 6, leave out 'twenty-five' and insert 'fifteen'.

No. 6, in page 2, line 6, leave out 'twenty-five' and insert 'twenty'.

No. 9, in page 2, line 6, leave out 'twenty-five' and insert 'ten'.

Mr. Darling: I make no bones about it, the 20 years is a compromise. When speaking of compromises, I must say that I was surprised to meet the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) in the Lobby a few moments ago. After his outburst, in which he was almost moved to tears, about the principle of the franchise, and the shame that he felt had been brought upon democracy in the House, it was surprising to discover him in the same Lobby as I and some of my hon. Friends.

Having accepted the figure of 20 years in clause 1, it is obviously logical to accept the same figure in clause 2.

I cannot agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and other hon. Members that it is absolutely wrong, and that, if one goes abroad, one loses all touch and, therefore, all right to vote in one's constituency. I have in mind one of my constituents who lived and voted in my constituency for a number of years. He went to work for the EC, initially for five years, and under the existing legislation was entitled to vote. As he is now going to do a further stint of five years, I do not see why he should be disfranchised in a separate election. And I am not just influenced in that. I am more than satisfied with the way in which he casts his vote. It is difficult to see why he should be disfranchised. As the mobility of labour increases and people go to work in Europe and other parts of the world, I do not believe that there is a strong principle that one must restrict the franchise to those who are resident within a constituency at any one time.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Darling: I will not give way, because I am sure that, if the hon. Gentleman really wants to speak, he will have little difficulty in catching the Chairman's eye.

On that basis, I trust that the amendment will be accepted, compromise or not.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) has moved amendment No. 5 and I believe that he was also speaking to amendment No. 6. At the risk of being accused by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) of being a party to a collusion and for the reasons that I outlined in my remarks in the last but one debate, I commend amendment No. 5 to the Committee.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 6, in page 2, line 6, leave out 'twenty-five' and insert 'twenty'.

Clause 2, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The Chairman: With the leave of the House, may I put together clauses 3 to 8?

Mr. Benn: No.

Clauses 3 to 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 6

INCREASE OF LIMITS ON EXPENSES OF CANDIDATES AT PARLIAMENTARY BY-ELECTIONS

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Benn: The clause introduces an anomaly into the control of election expenses that is completely unjustifiable and inexplicable. The Committee is being invited to say that substantially larger sums of money can be spent in by-elections than can be spent in general elections. Whatever the appropriate figure—I shall not argue what the figure should be—hon. Members are elected under the same rules, whether they are elected in a general election or a by-election. The idea that a by-election should entitle the parties to spend more than in a general election can be justified only on the basis that they already spend much more than they should in by-elections. At least, it has been widely reported that in by-elections the expenditure exceeds the legal limit.

I speak with some feeling on the matter as I have fought 15 elections as a parliamentary candidate, including four by-elections. I got in at a by-election, I was slung out at a by-election, I got back in at a by-election, and when my constituency was abolished in 1983 I got in again afterwards at a by-election. What is so highly undesirable about the great media circus in a by-election is that it means that a by-election is treated differently from a general election. Seventeen candidates stood at Chesterfield in 1984, and it was a media circus. There were 25 film units in the constituency for a month. All the hotels for miles around were booked by the various journalists who covered the by-election. If there are limits of any sort or kind, they should apply to everyone, whether they are involved in a general election or a by-election.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The number of candidates in the 1984 by-election at Chesterfield took the record away from my constituency when I was elected. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the reality in his by-election, as in others, was that more was spent by all the parties than the electoral limit? I suggest that that includes his own election and his own party.

Mr. Benn: I am not asking the House to go into that. I have said that it is widely accepted that the limit is exceeded. If the House passes a law, finds that it is disregarded and then makes an exception of the occasions when it is disregarded, that is not a satisfactory legislative procedure. I do not know, but it may well be that in some instances the limit is exceeded in general elections. Indeed, I had to appear before an electoral court in 1964, when it was alleged that I had spent more than in fact I had. I think that my agent put down many things under the head of election expenses—that is not uncommon—and as a result accidentally exceeded the limit. I do not think that we spent anything like the total sum recorded. However, I had the unpleasant experience of appearing before an election court and having to ask to be excused.

I am saying that if the House thinks that the limit is unreasonable, it should raise the limit, but we should not introduce a distinction between by-elections and general elections.

Mr. Simon Hughes: It seems that the by-election limit is unenforceable when national interest is focused on one constituency. That is never the position during a general election. I assume that that is the practical reason for the proposal set out in the clause.

Mr. Benn: The principle of unenforceability is based on the assumption that everyone is doing it, that no one wants to reveal that anyone else is doing it, and that it is believed that the limit should be raised. Perhaps even the proposed new limit would not cover some of the expenditures that are undertaken.

I do not believe that media by-elections perform any service in a parliamentary democracy. The media take over, but they have little to do with the constituencies where the by-elections occur. The journalists who pour into an area for a by-election have no interest in the locality where the election is taking place. Their purpose is to use the election as a test of opinion in a general election. For example, Peter Snow, on "Newsnight", examined a swing in a ward in Chesterfield and predicted an SDP Government in a general election.

Pollsters make a living out of these occasions. Vincent Hanna came to Chesterfield during the by-election and went to a ward where there had been an unhappy withdrawal of a candidate for personal reasons. He stood outside the polling station and said, "There has been a withdrawal because Mr. Benn has been selected as the Labour party's parliamentary candidate." His interest had nothing to do with the people in the area, and I do not think that that does Parliament any good.

I know that the Lobby makes a living out of by-elections, as do pollsters, but that is not necessarily a good thing. I say this with some feeling, because the party of which I am a member has already interpreted the arguments that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) advanced as a justification for saying, where there is a by-election, "We had better impose a candidate or retain the right to do so." That is not a good thing either, and that is a view that I have expressed both internally and externally. Candidates are there to represent the constituencies that choose them.

I am opposed to proportional representation in some forms because it would involve a list system. That would mean——

The Chairman: Order. There is nothing about proportional representation in the clause. I hope that we can stick to the subject of the clause.

11.45 pm

Mr. Benn: I am not wasting the time of the Committee but making the serious point that by-elections are the same as general elections because they are designed to fill vacancies. Once we say that a by-election is different, not only do we give more leeway for expenditure, but we begin to argue that the candidates should be chosen in a different way. Similarly, the list system would destroy the link between candidates and the locality that they represent.

These are not party matters. The Representation of the People Bill is generally accepted as a parliamentary matter which, in certain circumstances, might even go to a Speaker's Conference. I hope, therefore, that the House will not regard this as a narrow point of party advantage. The time has come for us to restate certain principles: candidates are chosen by the localities which have a chance to vote for them; when they stand as candidates they are all subject to indentical rules on expenditure; political parties, candidates and everyone else should discourage the media circus which brings Parliament into contempt.

I am opposed to a high deposit. I believe that it would be better to have nominations, so that the measure of support can be seen. I fought 17 candidates, some of whom were wholly frivolous in character. One man stood with the slogan, "Buy your Chesterfield couch in Thame". That was an advertising gimmick. By paying his deposit he received a free post to everyone in the constituency. That is not the way in which Parliament should organise elections, whether by-elections or general elections.

I hope that the House will consider my point seriously and not make the change, as once it is made the argument for raising the level for all expenditure to the by-election limit will become unanswerable. It will then be argued again that by-elections are special and the level will be raised once more.

One of the most important characteristics of parliamentary democracy in this country, compared with congressional elections in America, is that in the United States they spend millions and millions of dollars promoting candidates. Only wealthy people or those with massive support can stand for Congress, which is moving away from the idea upon which the franchise was founded —the principle that anyone should be able to stand for Parliament and manage a campaign without being outpaced by those whose purses are longer.

I seriously urge the House not to accept the clause, and I hope that you, Mr. Walker, understand that when I make these points I do so with considerable sincerity and a great deal of experience of by-elections and parliamentary elections.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): While I do not wish to follow the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) down all his favourite paths, I have considerable sympathy with his views on by-election expenses. I was responsible for running a large number of by-elections, and I was concerned about the reported levels of expenditure. However, I did not understand from the right hon. Gentleman's dissertation why, just because the media descend on a locality, it should be necessary for the candidates to spend more money. I have not seen that connection. My experience was that some of the minority parties regarded these occasions as a wonderful opportunity for the band wagon to roll and undertook considerable expenditure, to which, perhaps, other parties might want to respond in some lesser degree.

I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that we should think most seriously before creating a different category of expenditure for these occasions. I shall listen closely to the Minister's argument as to why we should support this clause, because I find it offensive, both in principle and as a matter of practicality. I have sympathy with the right hon. Gentleman's suggestions that we are running the grave risk of increasing expenditure limits for all elections and opening an undesirable door. I shall listen closely to the Minister's justification of why, merely because there is so much media attention, it is necessary for the candidates to spend more money.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The debate is worth while because it requires the Government to explain the reasons for their proposals. I share the view expressed by the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) and by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). Several issues are at stake here.

First, by countenancing much higher expenditure, are we disadvantaging certain parties' or candidates' chances of electoral success? In an age of advertising, those with a lot of money will spend to the maximum and do better in an election than people who have less.

Secondly, when a vacancy for a seat occurs, the by-election campaign to win it begins within days. If the seat becomes vacant due to a resignation, it begins immediately; if due to a death, after a decent interval.

Sir Hal Miller: It depends how you define decent.

Mr. Hughes: I agree.

Sometimes, a long time may elapse before the election. By-elections are not like general elections, for which, thank goodness, there are short campaigns. Campaigns can take months. I cannot understand how we can expect the same amount of money to be spent on a two-week campaign as on a campaign lasting four, five or six months. The longer the campaign, the more money will be spent.

Thirdly, I presume that the Government's argument is based on practicality, not principle. I share the concern of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield that the reason for the Government's proposal is their belief that the rules have long since been ignored. If that is so, it is illogical to distinguish between the levels of expenditure, given that a general election is an election of 650 Members, constituency by constituency, not an election by a list system for parties. If, as the thin end of the wedge, we are now introducing proposals affecting by-elections, there is no reason in principle why the same election expenses should not apply in general elections.

If so, we must deal with the whole subject of general election expenses. The greatest distortion at these elections is to be seen in the different amounts spent nationally by the various parties; they affect the result far more than the moneys spent supporting local candidates.

It is unprincipled to argue for this partial change without addressing the point raised by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield. I do not complain on behalf of myself or my colleagues, but other even smaller parties find it difficult to take on the party of Government, with all the

machinery and money that it can bring to bear—or to take on the Labour party, backed as it is by the unions, which invest massively in general election expenses.

I fear that this unprincipled proposal will not last long; it has no real justification and it is being introduced as a matter of temporary expediency.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I cannot see how this measure will work in practice, because there is an exemption from election expenses—regular newspapers, which can say what they like, promote candidates, endorse them editorially and so on. It is not beyond the wit of political parties to produce newsletters. We have seen them in by-elections; the name of *Focus* comes to mind. They can be produced daily or even hourly throughout the campaign.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Not quite.

Mr. Jones: I appreciate the difficulties of manpower. However, the newspapers can be produced regularly and can be used to get around the expenditure limits without too much difficulty.

Mr. Corbyn: I apologise for missing part of the speech made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) because I was delayed outside on urgent business. I am sure that he will forgive me.

I had tabled some amendments to clause 6, which were not selected, so it is clear that I have several objections to it. The first is the complete nonsense that the by-election expenses limit should be set high because by-election expenses are higher. Paper, petrol, telephone calls and all the other such factors do not cost any more. The only difference is that the massive interest in by-elections makes them into a media circus, with the local electorate being made into mere spectators in what should be their election campaign. The cost of all that leads the parties to believe that they should have an increased limit to meet the interests of the media.

If this provision goes through, I suspect that the next proposal will be to increase the limit for each parliamentary election by a similar amount. Once the precedent has been set in the by-elections, people will logically ask why, if this amount of £14,000 plus 16p per elector can be spent in by-elections, it should not be spent in general elections. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield said—I caught the end of his speech—we are then into the American situation, where those who spend the most win.

I agree that there is a case for increasing the expenses limit, and it should be increased regularly. However, I suggest that it should be uprated annually as the new register comes into force on 16 February each year. That would make the expenses limit open and clear in advance of the electoral year. I see nothing wrong with that. At least we would know where we are going, and would do so with an agreed figure.

There is also an omission from clause 6. It should abolish the electoral deposit and introduce instead a requirement to submit large numbers of names as a demonstration of political support. That would be better than the present system, which shows only the ability to pay one's way to get on the ballot paper, and would be more democratic. This is a bad Bill, and clause 6 is particularly bad, so I hope that the Committee will not accept it.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is a certain tension between the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), who spoke first to the clause on behalf of the Opposition, and welcomed it. The clause is justified for three reasons. The first is that the plain fact of life is that the by-election becomes the focus of national political interest. It is a partial view to describe it a focus for media interest. It is, but it is also a focus for political interest, and politicians go to by-elections in great numbers. One of the difficult questions is the extent of the expenditure attributable to those visiting politicians that should be recorded in the electoral expenses. There was a day, quite a long time ago, when Labour candidates were pleased to have the right hon. Member for Chesterfield support them at a by-election. I should be interested to know how often his travelling expenses were shown in the candidates' expenses.

Mr. Benn: The Minister is making a cheap point that may entertain his colleagues, but he is missing the point that I made. He is saying that the limit is exceeded, although he knows—as everyone knows—that the agent makes a statutory declaration. He has said that the law is disregarded, and that we all know that it is disregarded. He also made a comment about my travelling expenses, or anyone else's for that matter.

The hon. Gentleman is a Minister responsible for upholding the laws passed by Parliament. He has now told the House that those laws are disregarded, and I should like him to clarify that. Is he saying that the limit is being increased because the statutory declarations made by the parties in recent by-elections have, in the Government's view, been false? If that is his argument let us consider it on that basis, but it is a serious matter for a Government to say, "We know that the law is being broken, so we are going to change it."

12 midnight

Mr. Hogg: The right hon. Gentleman is not rising to the occasion; nor is he focusing on the issue. The issue is this: by-elections are of considerable political importance. As a consequence, the parties, often for a prolonged period—I agree with the point made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) about this—pour a large amount of resources into the constituency. Those resources frequently take the form of speakers of high renown, such as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield.

It is important to remember that only the courts can clarify which expenses are properly recordable and which are not. This is a seriously grey area. I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman's expenses, incurred when he is travelling to a by-election, should, in law, be incurred; generally the view has been taken that such expenses are not properly recordable, but I can envisage circumstances in which the courts would take a different view.

Because of the volume of effort put into particular by-elections, candidates' expenses may be very close to the ceiling. If the courts were to take an adverse view—a view inconsistent with the practice of 30 years or more—individual candidates and agents could find themselves seriously at risk. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield will know the nature of that risk better than most: it involves disqualification from membership of the House,

[Mr. Hogg]

with the possibility of a fine and imprisonment. That cannot be right, and the House has a duty to remedy such grey areas.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield will, I trust, bear in mind that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has made it plain that we shall re-examine the whole question of expenses. As an interim measure, however, the Committee is considering this clause, which has the general support of hon. Members.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): This is very interesting. Is the Minister saying that, if the clause is passed, the expenses of all parliamentarians visiting by-elections will have to be submitted?

Mr. Hogg: I am not saying that. I am saying that the items of expenditure which are properly recordable are not defined exactly in law. Consequently, there is uncertainty about whether—I cite this merely as an example—the expenses of a visiting politician should be recordable.

Clearly, in a number of cases, if all the expenses of politicians visiting by-elections had been recorded, it might well have transpired that the limits had been exceeded. I do not believe that anyone present would wish to deny an individual candidate the opportunity to attract the right hon. Member for Chesterfield; indeed, the Conservative party would be delighted if he appeared at every by-election in which a Labour candidate was participating. However, we do no want to put candidates at risk, and I cannot believe that hon. Members wish to put candidates at risk. It is on that basis that I commend the clause to the Committee.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): I have listened very carefully to my hon. Friend, but with the greatest respect I feel that he has made a spurious point. There is no difference between a visiting parliamentarian and any single constituent who chooses to travel from his home to wherever the particular constituency party or association sends him and who uses his car or public transport to get there. Although in theory my hon. Friend is right that the courts could decide that any money spent on transport for the purpose of assisting at a by-election should be recorded, to do so would be fatuous because it would be so totally impracticable. I do not agree with my hon. Friend that it is possible to draw a distinction between visiting parliamentarians and those who assist at by-elections.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is making my point. He says, quite rightly, that it is difficult to draw a distinction between a visiting parliamentarian and a large number of volunteers. He went on to say that in theory the courts could hold those expenses to be recordable. So they could. That is the problem. In a by-election, not only do prominent politicians come forward to support a particular candidate but very frequently, because it is part of our democratic procedures, a very large number of volunteers come forward, too. They incur expenses of many kinds. I can envisage courts taking the view that those expenses should be recordable. There is no point in saying that the matter will not be raised. I most certainly foresee the time when a number of minority parties that are not represented in this place at the moment may seek to raise the issue.

Sir Hal Miller: I realise that the Minister has to walk delicately, but unfortunately this clause has taken the cork out of the bottle. We are now having to discuss in the open matters which previously we preferred not to discuss. I have very considerable experience of these matters. Of course there is a grey area, as the Minister has just reminded us, but the Bill does not clarify that grey area in any way. Whereas it could previously be said that the current limitation on expenses acted as a brake on expenditure, the Minister is now lifting his foot off the brake and encouraging a great deal more expenditure.

It would help the Committee if, without it being too difficult for him, he could say why the new suggested limit is thought to be appropriate. According to a rough calculation, it would amount to about £26,000 in my constituency. That is a very considerable sum of money, but we have been given no clear idea of what expenses a sum of money of that magnitude would be expected to cover. I ask the Minister to help us, because it is a matter of some principle.

Mr. Hogg: Of course it is a matter of some importance, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising it, but he will forgive me, I hope, if I say that he does me less than justice. He will bear in mind that I have already said that this is only an interim measure. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made plain in his Second Reading speech and in a parliamentary answer, we are proposing, after discussions between the parties, to embark upon consultations as to expenses across the board.

The new clause is designed not to settle the position finally, but merely to protect it until that process of consultation is complete and it is possible to implement the product of that consultation process. My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) also asked how the new figures had been reached. There is nothing magic about that. They were the result of consultations between interested parties. As I say that, I fear that I shall be accused of collusion.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister is certainly trying to be helpful and I welcome that. As the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) said, we are all treading carefully, wary about what might appear from the bottle when it is uncorked. No doubt we all rely on our agents to deal with these matters and happily claim ignorance. That would apply to both sides of the House. I wish to ask the Minister two specific questions. First, can he give an estimate of the current expenditure in each of the by-elections? Secondly, as the Home Office must have done some work on this, can the Minister estimate the current expenditure by constituency in the last general election? If we are to have change before the next general election, that is relevant to the interim and final proposals.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman flatters me. I cannot answer either question without notice and I shall reply to him in writing.

Mr. Benn: Can the Minister help me on three points? Alternative amendments would have clarified the issue around which he built his case. If the Bill said that in considering election expenses, the travelling expenses of speakers visiting constituencies were to be excluded, that would have clarified a matter on which the Minister said the courts had not made judgment. It would have been a permissible amendment.

The second point that the Minister omits is that, in general elections, circuses of party leaders travel around and Members of Parliament visit other constituencies. I have no idea how those expenses are carried, but I represented a big city for 33 years, and at every election Mr. Attlee, Mr. Gaitskell or Mr. Wilson would visit, and presumably the expenses were quite substantial. There is no argument whatever in respect of those constituencies that attract major party leaders to differentiate a by-election from a general election.

Finally, the Minister said that the new clause is the result of informal consultations, which has been a characteristic of the Bill's consideration in Committee. If consultations are to take place—and must take place, because we have raised a subject that most right hon. and hon. Members do not discuss often—there is no reason why the provision should be in the Bill. Another Bill should be produced quite quickly, clarifying what is an election expense on the basis that general elections and by-elections are the same. With great respect to the Minister, who has not addressed the points that I have raised, this is not the right clause for the Bill and it should not have been included on the basis that the Bill happened to be before the House on quite another matter to provide a special exception for by-elections which generally do not contribute much to a public respect for parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Hogg: With respect to the right hon. Gentleman, his intervention does not go to the root of the matter. It is perfectly true that the travelling expenses of visiting politicians are excluded from recordable expense. But the right hon. Gentleman is not focusing on the fact that there are a whole variety of expenses which are in doubt. I gave one example—travelling expenses—but there are many others. The point made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is particularly important. At what point in the range of expenditure do expenses become recordable? Is it on the adoption of the candidate, or at some prior date? The point that I am making to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield is that a range of difficult questions must be addressed. For that reason, we propose to proceed by public consultation, and clause 6 is designed to protect the position pending the conclusion of that consultation.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield will know that on consultation we seek to move ahead with as much agreement as can reasonably be achieved. In the Bill, we have tried to identify at least two prior issues of high priority—expenses and the extended franchise. On that basis, only two elements are in the Bill.

12.15 pm

Mr. Maclennan: I have much sympathy with the Government's purpose, which they declared on Second Reading, for this interim measure. As the Minister spoke, I became more concerned about what will be the longer-term solution to the problem.

Given the attendance tonight, it is clear that hon. Members take an interest in the subject. The Secretary of State is to initiate a process of public consultation. Has consideration been given to what I believe is quite normal in such matters—the setting up of a Speaker's Conference, and without delay, because this is pre-eminently a House of Commons matter? It seems to me that the Government should not necessarily take the lead in organising consultation. I hope that the Minister will say whether he has considered that and whether he would look favourably on it.

Mr. Hogg: The answer to the question asked by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) is yes, consideration has been given to the proposal that he made. It has been thought best to proceed in the way that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State outlined on Second Reading, which is the approach that I commend.

Mr. Benn: I listened carefully to the Minister, but I am wholly unpersuaded. Like every hon. Member, I have had to sign the statutory declaration, which is a solemn thing to have to do. Not only the agent but the Member must sign it and, as the Minister rightly said, when the hon. Member signs it he runs the risk of getting into difficulties with disqualification, punishment or, so far as I know, imprisonment. On a technicality, I once had to ask for relief from election courts, so I am speaking with some feeling.

The proper way to deal with the matter is to clarify what is an election expense. If people help by driving their cars around a constituency, it must be decided whether such expenditure should be included. If it is, one is faced with the impossible task of deciding who travelled where to take people to the polls. Without doubt, that should not be included. Expenditure incurred when people visit a constituency should not be included, although clearly there would have to be consultation.

The issue, surely, is the definition of an election expense and the proper limit. My understanding of the reason for a limit is to stop an enormous sum of money being spent not on bringing in visiting speakers but on influencing people by mass propaganda, which gives an advantage to those who have the longest purses. For all those reasons, I shall oppose clause 6 in the Lobby, not because I do not want the matter to be taken seriously and urgently but because the Government have come to a shoddy way of tackling a problem that is of legitimate concern to the public and to hon. Members who are required to make statutory declarations.

Some Members die unexpectedly. When a prospective candidate is adopted as a candidate, he will not know whether he will fight a general election or a by-election. Just after a general election, there is always a wave of by-elections. First, there is the general election expenditure and, if the freshly elected Member goes to the House of Lords or the EEC, there is a by-election and immediately the expenditure increases—at a time when the turnout usually decreases.

I ask the Minister to consider this matter. I will seek to divide the Committee. This is not a matter that just needs discussions between the national agents of the two parties. It requires public scrutiny and discussion and a clear statement of the principles upon which the law is to be founded, followed by enforcement of the law so that people do not apparently disregard it.

Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 126, Noes 13.

Division No. 284] **[12.20 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Alton, David
Allason, Rupert	Arbuthnot, James

Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hawkins, Christopher
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howells, Geraint
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Cryer, Bob
Loyden, Eddie
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Nellist, Dave
Primarolo, Dawn
Spearing, Nigel
Vaz, Keith
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Benn and
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Clause 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.
Clauses 7 and 8 ordered to stand part of the Bill.
Bill reported, with amendments; as amended, considered.

Motion made, and Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 127, Noes 14.

Division No. 285] **[12.32 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hawkins, Christopher
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howells, Geraint
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Cryer, Bob
Gordon, Mildred
Loyden, Eddie
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Nellist, Dave
Primarolo, Dawn

Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

PETITIONS

National Health Service Reform

12.42 am

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontrefract and Castleford): I wish to present a petition which reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled,

The Humble Petition of patients of a general practitioner's in Pontefract, showeth

The patients of the practice, believe that the Health Service as it exists outside the private sector is under threat and could collapse.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Government to withdraw the White Paper "Working for Patients"

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

The petition is signed by 1,800 people, and it has my full support.

To lie upon the Table.

Community Charge

12.43 am

Mr. George J. Buckley (Hemsworth): I present a petition on behalf of my constituents about the injustice and hardship that the introduction of the poll tax will cause. The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of the residents of South Kirkby, Pontefract.

That we draw to the attention of the House of Commons that the introduction of the poll tax will cause unnecessary hardship on people living in Low Rated Houses owned or rented, this iniquitous tax will hit many people on low income many in my area who have served the Country in the Armed Forces during the 1939/45 war and many who have worked a lifetime down the coal mines. We feel that not only will the Poll Tax have immediate effect of hardship on these people when it is introduced, but will have a more serious effect when the transitional period is over.

Wherefore our petitioners pray that your Honourable House will urge the Government to bring in amendment to this Legislation to protect these people from the ravages of this unfair tax.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

The petition is signed by 1,200 of my constituents and it has my full support.

To lie upon the Table.

Football (Identity Cards)

12.45 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I have great pleasure in presenting this petition on behalf of the residents of Bradford, South who wish to express their very strong opposition to the football identity card scheme. They are especially concerned that the lessons of Hillsborough have not been learnt by the Government, who are forcing the legislation through the House and are already suggesting all-night sittings. That is a disgraceful trampling on democratic parliamentary rights.

The petition states:

To the Honourable Commons of the United Kingdom, Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the Parliament assembled showeth that the undersigned signatories express their condemnation of proposed legislation to force football supporters to carry identity cards.

We believe that a system of identity cards will have little impact on the problem of football related violence, will hinder football's attempts to attract a new generation of supporters and will lead to the eventual demise of the game as a spectator sport.

Wherefore your petitioner prays that the Government bring forward proposals which have the support of genuine football supporters. And your petitioner is duty bound, will pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Investment (North-West Region)

12.47 am

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Any hon. Member rising in the House at a quarter to one in the morning to initiate an Adjournment debate could hardly say that it was a matter of great pleasure. I am especially grateful to the Minister for having sat though the previous debates and presentations of petitions to be here to answer the debate on the subject of infrastructure and investment expenditure in the north-west region.

The hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) is also here to share in the debate and to show the cross-party support for this subject, which need not divide people on partisan lines but can unite people from our region in the need to develop our infrastructure to meet the two challenges of the 1990s—the coming of the single European market in 1992 and the opening of the Channel tunnel in 1993. Those two key events will make or break our region and will determine whether we become the gateway to the European Community or a mere backwater of Europe. We are not looking for sympathy or for handouts, but more for a recognition of the challenges that lie ahead and a willingness from Government to lend a helping hand. Despite the problems that the region faces, we are confident about its future and we want a partnership of public and private enterprise, of central and local government, of north and south.

I should like the Minister to consider a series of initiatives which would guarantee the future prosperity of our region. First, the region needs a carefully planned infrastructure to meet the ever-increasing transportation demands. That means better road and rail links. The existing motorway network, like the curate's egg, is good in parts, but the railway system is another matter altogether. How inappropriate it is that on the very day that our railways have again been closed by industrial action the Chancellor should announce his unwillingness to see improved investment in the system. Even more paradoxically, the announcement came within minutes of British Rail announcing a massive profit of £300 million. That is a staggering situation, given that it is sometimes impossible for people travelling to the north-west to find seats on InterCity trains. The local services are no better.

I have recently been in correspondence with the chairman of British Rail, Sir Robert Reid, about the service between Liverpool and Manchester. That follows a letter which I received from a constituent, who catalogued for me the number of times on which his train arrived late. On the first day, 23 May, it was five minutes late. The next day, it was 23 minutes late. Thereafter it was late by 15 minutes, 33 minutes, 10 minutes and 38 minutes. At the end of the letter, my constituent wrote:

> "I am now near to distraction. I'm spending so much time waiting at Oxford Road Station at Manchester for non-existent trains or ones that are horrendously late. Once or twice a month I can live with but as a daily occurrence it's a nightmare."

In reply, Sir Robert Reid wrote:

> "It is true that the radical changes in the Manchester area timetable introduced on 15 May have been plagued by shortages of rolling stock which have adversely affected punctuality and reliability. Indeed, we have been experiencing difficulties in many parts of the North West due to the unsatisfactory gearboxes in our 'Pacer' trains necessarily being replaced by the manufacturers."

All this points to the need for adequate investment in our railway system.

The condition of the sidings and the track around Edge Hill station, which I think is the world's oldest railway station still in use, and of many other local stations, as well as the approach to Liverpool Lime street, which is like the black hole of Calcutta, is an appalling advertisement for British Rail and for the city. Those areas, which are owned by British Rail, are dirty and neglected. Despite a recent meeting that I had with regional officers, little or nothing has been done to improve matters. Against that backdrop, British Rail's planned expenditure for future development is minuscule.

North-west Members are rightly anxious because British Rail's proposals for high-speed rail links and for railheads linked into the European network once the Channel tunnel is opened, have not been properly thought through. I am especially anxious that the railhead should be developed within the Liverpool freeport area to ensure that the freeport, which has been extremely successful, is able to capitalise on the opportunities that 1992 will present. On Friday last, my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) was good enough to accompany me to the freeport during his visit to the region. I am sure that he will confirm what I have said about the railhead, and I am pleased that he is in his place tonight.

On 6 March, I wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport about Merseytravel's anxieties that British Rail may not be wholly committed to providing direct through trains from the continent to the north-west. Forecasts suggest that a market will exist for at least two daytime high-speed through services from the north-west to Paris or Brussels, and probably an overnight service with a mixture of sleeping cars and reclining seat coaches as well. This would offer about 1,000 seats a day between the north-west and the rest of Europe. In addition, it is estimated that 1,000 lorry movements a day will transfer to rail post-1993. Three quarters of these movements will start or finish beyond London.

I hope that the Minister will confirm that the £150 million investment planned by British Rail on electrification, track improvements and new locomotives will be adequate to meet the demand. I hope that he will also say whether British Rail's choice of King's Cross as the second London terminal for Channel tunnel passenger trains will place the north-west at a disadvantage, as Merseytravel believes.

I am especially heartened that the north-west region of the TUC, as well as the local chamber of commerce, have come out in favour of the land bridge proposal and have argued that infrastructure investment should provide opportunities for competing properly within Europe. In a note to north-west Members, the North West Regional Council of the TUC stated:

> "Preliminary studies have pointed to the urgent need for strategic thinking, particularly on infrastructure investment and regional policy, if the net effects of developments in the early 1990s are to be positive."

It adds:

> "Some work has begun already on the concept of Liverpool as a 'land bridge': European-bound container traffic from North America could be received at Liverpool and conveyed by through trains to European destinations. This option offers shorter journey times and improves

operating efficiency by avoiding congestion in the Channel. The Merseyside Chamber of Commerce and Industry is working on a feasibility study. The NW TUC welcomes and fully supports this initiative . . . In addition to the improvements in the rail network, an integrated transport infrastructure is essential if the North West is to gain from the Channel Tunnel. Recognising that, if rail is successful in dramatically increasing its share of freight traffic, a major proportion of freight will still have to be carried by road. Investment in the road network is therefore also an integral part of the programme necessary to the North West."

I strongly support what the north-west TUC and the chamber of commerce have argued, and they have the full support of north-west Members of Parliament. So, too, has the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company in its proposals for expanding the very successful freeport. That demonstrates how, given the opportunity, business can flourish in the north-west of England.

The Government established six freeports and, without trying to undermine any of the others, the other five have done pretty lamentably, whereas the Liverpool freeport has turned over £300 million-worth of business since its inception and has been a major success story.

In a letter to me today, following the meeting that my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and I had with Mr. Frank Rowbotham of the Liverpool freeport last Friday, Mr. Rowbotham states:

"To ensure the development of the first phase of the Freeport Park"—

some 20,000 sq ft—

"an urban development grant of 34 per cent. was necessary. Following the success of the first phase, an application for now what is City Grant Assistance has been submitted. It is still essential that the same level of assistance is forthcoming to make the next stage competitive and viable."

In other words, if the freeport is to continue to be successful, it will need a continued helping hand from Government.

On the Mersey estuary, the Mersey barrage presents an opportunity for a major piece of infrastructure and development. If the Government would give this project the green light, it could provide not just energy for local industries but an impounded area for more deep-sea facilities and massive numbers of construction jobs in an area in which, as the Minister well knows, there is a great need for more opportunities in the construction industry. The Government have given money for the feasibility study, which I welcome, and the project would involve the cleaning up of the Mersey at a time when more than 200 companies have permission to pollute the Mersey through the exemptions which they have been given. The project would not merely be a way of improving the quality of life, but would create more employment and attract more people to use the river as an area from leisure recreation and amenity.

One of the great advantages which the Government could bring to the area would be to support the campaign which has been waged by the *Liverpool Echo* newspaper and others for the Channel 5 television station to be based in the north-west. That would give the area a chance to develop its own media and infrastructure for promoting its image. If Glasgow, which has infinitely more problems than the major conurbations in the north-west, has been able to turn its image around, there is no reason why Liverpool, Manchester and the townships of the north-west should not do the same.

Basing Channel 5 in our region would prove a major asset and a great bonus to us. Similarly, other public bodies and private enterprise should also consider devolving to the north-west, which has a great deal going for it. The south-east economy is increasingly overheated and bloated, and the north-west has enormous appeal to tourists and companies seeking a good quality of life for their employees. As the south-east economy falters, with high interest rates, soaring overheads, a weak pound, tight labour markets and a rapidly deteriorating quality of life, the north-west could become a prosperous and booming gateway to Europe.

There are still unemployment disparities between north and south. Last Thursday, Business Strategy, an independent forecaster, stated that in 1990 unemployment in the north could still be as high as 9·4 per cent., which is twice that of the south-east. That need not be a curse—it should be a challenge. This debate gives the House a chance to stress our bipartisan support for a Government strategy based on turning the curse of unemployment into a challenge to provide the north-west with the infrastructure necessary if we are properly to meet the challenge of 1992 and 1993.

1.1 am

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) for arranging this debate and for allowing me to take part, briefly, in it. I agree with him that it is regrettable that the only time we have a debate on the north-west is when we are successful in the Ballot for private Members' motions or Adjournment debates, and I believe that the north-west is far too important to be dealt with in that way.

No one living in or visiting the north-west can fail to recognise, or be impressed by, the enormous amount of investment that has taken place there in recent years—investment in roads, rail, housing, industry, and the National Health Service, and in clearing up dereliction. But it is the investment in the highway network which has been most important in helping the region to help itself and in generating further investment—certainly in my part of the north-west, east Lancashire.

We are grateful for all that has been achieved, but there is a pressing need for even more if we are to take advantage of the opportunities now being opened to us. We need help to improve access to and within urban areas, to employment centres and airports and to Europe and the Channel tunnel. In the north-west as a whole, total investment requirements to meet the needs of motorways and trunk roads alone have been estimated at £1·2 billion, making it necessary to double the current level of investment to reach the desired standard for the national road network in the north-west by 2001.

Such investment would stimulate growth in employment and tourism, as recent investment in motorways in east Lancashire has shown. That investment has enabled Hyndburn borough council to attract an enthusiastic and energetic private developer, Mr. Eddy Quiligotti, to create a tourist attraction of national significance on land at the M65-A56-M66 junction at Huncoat. The estimated capital development cost of the scheme, known locally as the Winter Wonderland, is in excess of £250 million. It is expected to create 2,000 direct full-time jobs and 1,200 off-site jobs, and it is hoped that it will attract 4 million tourists each year. The park will provide a superb range of entertainment, sporting, eating and specialist shopping facilities. It is the best news that Hyndburn has had for years. All this has been made possible because the existing

[Mr. Ken Hargreaves]

or planned motorway connections to the M6, M61 and M62 mean that 5·5 million people now live within one hour's drive of Accrington—hence the importance of more investment.

Tourism in the north-west is a major expansion industry, and it is consequently a matter of concern that section 4 of the tourism grant aid scheme continues to be suspended. That scheme has been a vital pump-priming aid and its reinstatement would be beneficial to tourism in the north-west, not least to the Winter Wonderland project. With the reinstatement of section 4 and increased investment in the highways, I believe that the future of the north-west will be bright. I hope that the Government will listen to and take seriously many of the points made in this short debate.

1.3 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Robert Atkins): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) for raising the interests——

Mr. Alton: Grateful?

Mr. Atkins: Perhaps grateful is not the right word, as the hon. Gentleman will understand. None the less, it is important that the interests of the region that he and my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) represent should be drawn to the attention of more people. As both said, the north-west is an area that is doing extremely well. Like many other areas, it has problems that it would be wrong to dismiss out of hand, but in general what is going on in the north-west, and even in the north-west extremities of our regions, as my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) will acknowledge, has developed great strengths about which we should talk far more.

A few days ago a major contract, which has many ramifications for the area, was awarded to a company in the north-west, Leyland DAF. The contract, which is to build the new truck for the Army, is worth £500 million, and transfers work that was originally intended for the south-east to the north-west. That is a tribute to what has been going on in our region.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill said much about transport matters. I shall touch on them wearing as much a constituency and a regional hat as a ministerial one, but he will know that these are, broadly speaking, matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I found myself drawn, even to the point of sedentary comment, to some of what he said about the railways. Like him, and my hon. Friend, I travel on British Rail at the weekends, so I have sympathy with the points that he made about tardiness, but much money has been spent on British Rail, and more will be spent. I shall draw, with a great deal of pleasure and support, his comments about infrastructure investment to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He may not be surprised to learn that I am doing so regularly off my own bat anyway.

Both the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend spoke about tourism. My hon. Friend will know, and the hon. Member for Mossley Hill will, in his usual charitable way, agree, that my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee), who is the Minister with responsibility for tourism, has worked long and hard, all over the country, but specifically in the north-west, to ensure the development of certain parts of our region, whether they are rural and conventionally attractive, seaside resorts or areas of industrial archaeological interest. The new tourist attractions mentioned by my hon. Friend, and those in my area, let alone those in Liverpool, are a tribute not only to my hon. Friend the Minister but to the tourism industry, which is developing regularly.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Will the Minister take into account an important aspect of the future of Liverpool, Merseyside, and the hinterland of the north-west? Liverpool as a port is still an important factor. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that Liverpool maintains its port transactions and transport. Infrastructure is required to make Liverpool accessible to the continental ports, so that the port, which is still part of the economy, is taken into account in the general developments.

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman will recognise that it is difficult for me to be drawn on matters that are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. Equally, as a north-west Member, and one who spent two years of his working life in Liverpool associated with shipping and other related activities, I know only too well the importance of the port of Liverpool. Many of us recognise that while Liverpool has had its difficulties—I make no partisan point here—it is crucial in every respect to the development and continued success of the north-west, along with Manchester, through its airport, and other areas in both the extremities and the centre. The hon. Gentleman has made a fair point about infrastructure support, and I would go along with it.

The hon. Gentleman also made a fair point about the image of the north-west, as, indeed, did my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn. Many of us would agree that the image is often portrayed in "Coronation Street" terms, and that there is a great deal more to our region than that—not only in the industrial sector but in tourism and, above all, in the attractive countryside and the people who contribute so much to the success of the north-west.

Hon. Members may know that, although I represent a north-western constituency, I am a southerner by origin. I have now been in the north-west for some 13 years, and I have been immensely impressed by the quality, dedication, enthusiasm and sheer commitment of the work force at all levels. They want to improve their area and to do their task—however it is perceived, and whatever the industry—to the best of their ability. If it is nothing else, the strength of the north-west is a work force that contributes so much to what is achieved, whether in my constituency, the hon. Gentleman's or that of my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn. I think that we would all agree about that.

In my experience of travelling around the region, both as an Industry Minister with regional responsibilities and as a local Member of Parliament—I think that I can say this without too much contradiction, saving the presence of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr.

Wallace), who is from the extemities of our nation—the north-west provides the best work force in the United Kingdom, if they are properly guided.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and the Border): Especially Penrith.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend must not make sedentary interventions of that nature, or he will provoke me.

The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the importance of 1992, which provides a challenge as well as an opportunity. We are well placed to meet that challenge in the north-west, for various reasons that have been discussed this evening and on earlier occasions. I believe that the British economy and our regional economy are fundamentally strong, and that the challenge of facing up to what will effectively be a domestic market of some 320 million people—with all the opportunities that that provides—can be met.

I use the word "challenge" because, if we do not recognise the opportunity by the region's great manufacturing, service and professional industries, other companies and organisations on the mainland of Europe will seek the opportunity to come to us and beat us at our own game. Any area within the region that hon. Members care to name—Liverpool, Manchester, Preston, Accrington, even Penrith—has many virtues, developed over decades or perhaps centuries. Perhaps occasionally we are a little too complacent and smug about the fact that the world can pass it by and somehow, if we carry on as we are, we shall be all right. We can do that no longer, for 1992 will present a challenge that we ignore at out peril.

It has been the task of my Department, first, to ensure that industries are aware of exactly what 1992 means. When we started our successful campaign, about one in two companies—that includes our region—were aware of what was going on, which meant that 70 or 80 per cent. were not. As a result of our campaign, the figure is nearly 100 per cent. Not all companies, however, know that they must make the decision to face up to the opportunity. It is a message that I invite the hon. Member for Mossley Hill and my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn to convey to the companies and the people in their constituencies. It is simply, as Winston Churchill said all those years ago, that action is needed "this day", to make sure that one knows what needs to be done and gets on with it.

I am quite convinced that the hon. Member for Mossley Hill and my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn are fully aware of the strengths of our region and recognise the challenges that have been presented to it, of which the Channel tunnel is one. I do not wish to be drawn as yet as to where the location of investment should be. Many of my constituents take one view; many of the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn may take another. I am content to leave it to my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), who is responsible for transport matters, but I shall put to him that view and that concern.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Mossley Hill for raising in his own inimitable way the interest and the concern of our region, which the Government share. He is right to say that it is a cross-party matter. Representatives of the three major parties are here tonight. I shall do my best, as a Minister with responsibility for the regions and industry, to ensure that our region gets the best that is available to it.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 6 July 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question —[23 May]—That the Bill be now read the Third time.
Debate to be resumed on Thursday 13 July

BRITISH RAILWAYS (PENALTY FARES) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for further consideration, as amended, read.
To be further considered on Thursday 13 July.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*

BROMLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL (CRYSTAL PALACE) BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 13 July.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
Considered; to be read the Third time.

LONDON UNDERGROUND (VICTORIA) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL *(By Order)*

VALE OF GLAMORGAN (BARRY HARBOUR) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

HAYLE HARBOUR BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

QUEEN MARY AND WESTFIELD COLLEGE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 13 July.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Devaluation

1. **Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether it is the policy of Her Majesty's Government to resist a devaluation of the pound sterling.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): The Government are determined not to allow the firmness of their monetary stance to be undermined by a depreciation of the exchange rate.

Mr. Davies: May I remind the right hon. Gentleman that since he became Chancellor the pound has been devalued by 25 per cent. against the deutschmark? Whatever the Government's policy, is it not now obvious that with the balance of payments deficit likely to be horrendous for some considerable time, with foreigners now depositing £25 billion in very short-term money in the City of London—a figure which exceeds the Government's foreign currency reserves—and with the Government having vetoed entry to the European monetary system, which could have stabilised those reserves, the stage is now set for a major run on the value of sterling? Is the Chancellor aware of that?

Mr. Lawson: Well, in the first place I would like to thank the right hon. Gentleman who is, of course, a former Treasury Minister, for supporting the policy of the Government when he said last month:

"Mr. Lawson has got no option to what he is doing. The Labour Party idea that you should have credit controls is rubbish. There is no way you can control credit except by controlling the price of credit, and the price of credit is Bank Rate.

The Opposition Front Bench, in short, is all over the place."

He is quite right, so I would like to congratulate him on that.

As for the question of what has happened to sterling, it is true—*[Interruption.]* It is not the case that entry to the EMS has been vetoed. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reaffirmed, at the Madrid European Council, our intention to join the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS. I do not think that it is really very helpful for the right hon. Gentleman to try to talk the pound down. It makes him look particularly silly in a week in which the pound has been rising.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is important to ensure that the pound finds its own true value? Does he further agree that, in the end, the most important factor for Britain will be its export potential? Is it not true that with the pound at present levels British industry, at long last, has a chance to compete? If the pound is too high, there is difficulty with imports and exports. My right hon. Friend's policy of allowing the pound to find its own level is right, as long as he stops interfering.

Mr. Lawson: I have noted, of course, a certain asymmetry in my hon. Friend's views. He is very anxious that the pound should find its own level when he thinks the pound is likely to go down; he is very anxious that

everything should be done to prevent any movement when he thinks the pound is likely to go up. I have noticed that there are a number of hon. Members on the other side of the House and also some outside this House who take that rather asymmetrical view. *[Interruption.]* What I do tell my hon. Friend is that he is absolutely right that the present climate is one in which British exporters have every chance of doing very well in world markets, and indeed I am glad to say that they are doing well. Exports are well up, and that was shown particularly in the most recent trade figures.

Ms. Short: Does the Chancellor agree that the balance of payments problem shows that the pound is over valued? I thought that he believe in market forces. Why does not he stop intervening, allow the pound to drop and then join the EMS? Is not that the answer to our problems?

Mr. Lawson: I am interested to hear the hon. Lady, who does not normally support her Front-Bench spokesmen, on this occasion supports the inflationary policies that they are putting forward, including a substantial devaluation of the pound. That would not be helpful to the British economy; least of all would it be helpful to the struggle against inflation. The Government have no intention of following that policy.

Value Added Tax

2. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about zero rating of value added tax for hospital radio broadcasting equipment.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): My right hon. Friend has received one letter since the reply I gave to my hon. Friend on 6 April this year.

Mr. Amess: Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the national associations of hospital broadcasting organisations on their magnificent work throughout Britain in broadcasting to people who are unwell? Will my hon. Friend consider giving them further help by zero-rating VAT on hospital radio broadcasting equipment, treating it in the same way as talking books for the blind?

Mr. Lilley: I am sure that the House will want to join me in paying tribute to the marvellous work done by hospital broadcasting in many of our constituencies, not least my own, and in paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) for his consistent support for hospital broadcasting. As he knows, under EC law we are constrained in our ability to introduce new zero rates. We got away with extending the zero rates on printed matter to newspapers for the blind because of the analogy between the two, but that would not work in the case of hospital broadcasting equipment, which is not specialised and is not provided for hospitals alone. I hope that the hospital broadcasting movement will benefit from the many other moves that we have made to encourage increased support for charities.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome the Minister's response in paying tribute, but bearing in mind that in the scriptures tributes are the same as taxes, will he keep pressing to give them the benefit of that tribute?

Mr. Lilley: We shall continue our efforts to encourage charities in every way that we can, and we believe that the primary way in which to do that through the fiscal system is to encourage people to give more and to increase support. In that we have been successful, and charitable giving has more than doubled in real terms.

Mrs. Peacock: I appreciate what my hon. Friend says about the work of hospital broadcasting, but will he recognise the difficulties of many of those stations, particularly when they move to magnificent new hospital premises and have to re-equip completely, as my hospital radio station has had to do? What words of encouragement can he give to enable them to face the massive VAT bills that they will undoubtedly have to pay?

Mr. Lilley: As I have said, there is no prospect of our altering the VAT treatment of hospital radio equipment, but I hope that the great support that the movement has in the House will be reflected in the support that everybody gives such organisations in our constituencies so as to ensure that they are properly funded to carry on the great work that they do for patients.

Economic Policy

3. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from institutions in the City of London about United Kingdom economic policy.

17. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from institutions in the City of London about United Kingdom economic policy.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): My right hon. Friend often receives advice from the City, most of it unsolicited.

Mr. Jones: From that reply I take it that the Chancellor may not have seen the Chase Investment bank report which stated that inflation was likely to peak at over 9 per cent. this year and that 18 per cent. interest rates would be needed to bring inflation down to 4 or 5 per cent. by 1992. Bearing in mind that the report was based on the Chancellor's Treasury model, will the Chancellor confirm that his young friends in the City are correct and that he would be prepared to put interest rates up to 18 per cent. by 1992?

Mr. Major: If my right hon. Friend had seen that report —I am not sure whether he has—he would certainly not have agreed with it.

Mr. Griffiths: Has the Minister received any representations from the City about how to deal with the problem of directors' huge pay increases? He may have seen the report that five of the top 100 company directors had increases of 50 per cent. and 91 had on average a 28 per cent. increase in their pay? Bearing in mind the Chancellor's views on pay and inflation, has he proffered them any advice on how to bring those increases down to a reasonable level, or does he believe in allowing wages to go up and keeping interest rates high?

Mr. Major: I do not support unjustified pay increases from any source, including directors—and neither does my right hon. Friend. While I have no intention of defending them, they are not under our control.

Mr. John Townend: Does my right hon. Friend agree with the remarks made yesterday by the Governor of the Bank of England, when he commented that aggressive advertising by the banks to persuade people to borrow more so that they can spend more makes him feel uncomfortable?

While credit controls are neither desirable nor practicable, does my right hon. Friend agree that the clearing banks and big City institutions should act responsibly? Would it be a good idea for the governor to invite the chairmen of the clearing banks to the delightful garden behind his office and—over a long, cool summer drink—tell them that it is in their long-term interests to act in the long-term interests of the country?

Mr. Major: I share the governor's instincts, but what action he takes is a matter for him. I certainly do not believe that credit controls would be the answer.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Is it not imperative for the City and for industry alike that my right hon. Friend's chief and abiding priority continues to be controlling inflation—even though, in the short term, that remedy may be painful to borrowers—because inflation threatens competitiveness, erodes savings, and threatens jobs?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is entirely right. That is the central proposition before the Government at present, and my right hon. Friend has put in place the policies to bring down inflation.

Mr. Beith: Is it not widely recognised in the City that London would be the obvious centre for a central European bank, and that Britain should be in the European monetary union of which that central bank would be a part? From a counter-inflationary point of view, would it not be better if that central bank had more of the independence enjoyed by the Bundesbank, rather than the relationship that the Bank of England has with the Government?

Mr. Major: These are matters that will have to be addressed in the future, but I am bound to say that others may hold views that differ from the premise of the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Latham: Before my right hon. Friend throws the unsolicited junk mail that he receives from the City into the wastepaper basket, will he ask some of the teenage scribblers to send him a table showing their predictions of economic outcome in the last five years compared with the actual outturns?

Mr. Major: I shall be very happy to study those projections and the eventual outcome. It is undoubtedly true that over a run of years, Treasury forecasts have been the most accurate.

Mr. Gordon Brown: As the Chancellor spent yesterday attacking the railmen, will the Chief Secretary take the opportunity that I am giving him today to condemn the pay increases which have given Sir Jeffrey Sterling a rise of £160,000 in one year alone, Lord King of British Airways £100,000 in one year alone, and the head of Warburg £350,000—on top of the top-rate tax cuts awarded to them last year? Will the Chief Secretary explicitly comdemn such pay rises—yes or no?

Mr. Major: Yesterday, my right hon. Friend condemned the strike, not individual railmen. If the hon. Gentleman had listened, he would have heard what I said earlier about unjustifiable pay demands. They are unjustifiable whether they are made by directors or by workers.

Income Tax

4. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the extra yield of income tax if the basic rate were raised to 33 per cent.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): An 8 per cent. increase in the basic rate of income tax to 33 per cent. would yield about £13·5 billion extra in a full year at 1989-90 income levels, assuming that there were no behavioural effects.

Mr. Summerson: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it is no part of Government policy to increase the burden of income tax, whereas, so far as anyone can tell, that is precisely the policy of the Labour party?

Mr. Lamont: As my hon. Friend knows very well, we have reduced the burden of taxation and shall continue to do so. Judging by the expenditure plans put forward by the Labour party, if the Opposition ever came to power they would be well on the way to putting tax up to the level it was when they were last in office, which was 33p. Every day we hear of Labour policies such as a pensions increase equal to 1p on income tax, an increase in overseas aid equal to 1p on income tax, increased child benefit, a carer's allowance, renationalisation of the water industry and of British Telecom, and the introduction of a minimum wage. They would all have only one result, which would be to increase the basic rate of income tax to all taxpayers.

Mr. Frank Field: Why do the Government put so much effort into boosting the nanny welfare state for taxpayers? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that if the Government phased out all tax benefits we could have a standard rate of tax of between 12p and 15p in the pound? Would that not be a radical tax policy and, if so, why do the Government not introduce it?

Mr. Lamont: As the hon. Gentleman knows, in the Budgets this year and last year the Government blocked a significant number of loopholes. In last year's Budget, some £800 million was raised by the blocking of loopholes. We have taxed the use of company cars and blocked the forestry loophole. I agree that we should get marginal rates down and get average rates up.

Sir William Clark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, historically, a reduction in taxation has meant that there has been a greater take for the Chancellor of the Exchequer? Does my right hon. Friend agree that if taxation were increased, revenue to the Exchequer would decrease?

Mr. Lamont: That, of course, was the point to which I referred when I spoke of behavioural effects. There must be some tax maximising rate. It cannot be true for ever

that, however much taxes are cut, more revenue will be raised. What we have done, especially at the top end, has increased the tax take.

European Monetary System

5. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure that he has for the rate of inflation in the United Kingdom; and what is the average inflation rate for countries who are full members of the European monetary system.

Mr. Lawson: Excluding owner-occupier housing costs in order to put the figures on a more comparable basis, United Kingdom inflation currently stands at 6 per cent. compared with an average of 4½ per cent. for the countries which are full members of the European monetary system.

Mr. Hughes: Given that the other inflation figure is 8·3 per cent. and not 6 per cent., when will the Chancellor say that our inflation will be low enough to allow us to join the exchange rate mechanism? What figure does he put on that inflation rate to allow us to join, given the conditions that he laid down before the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and that the Prime Minister laid down in Madrid?

Mr. Lawson: On the first point that the hon. Gentleman has made, I have to tell him that he is mistaken. Of the other countries that he mentiooned, only one has mortgage interest payments in its index, and a great many of them—in fact, about a half of them—have nothing at all for owner-occupier housing costs, nothing at all. Therefore, the only way to have a truly comparable figure is to take owner-occupier housing out, which is what I did, and that is a very different comparison between the 6 per cent. and the 4½ per cent. As for the second question that the hon. Gentleman put to me, the answer is: lower than it is today.

Mr. Dykes: Does not the impressive experience of the EMS and the ERM show that it makes the vulnerable currencies in the system stronger rather than weaker? Are there not good lessons to be learnt for the pound sterling?

Mr. Lawson: Certainly, it is true that all those countries that are members of the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS to my knowledge believe that this has been beneficial to them, but it is a mistake to infer from that that all one has to do to run a successful economic policy is to join the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS. That is very much not the case. The same hard choices that have to be taken outside the exchange rate mechanism have to be taken inside it as well.

Mr. Foot: As it was obviously a major event in the control of our economic policy and inflationary policy, would the right hon. Gentleman care to tell us the exact terms of the apology that he received from the Prime Minister?

Mr. Lawson: I have no wish to comment at all on private conversations that may or may not have taken place between my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and myself. We are at one on the subject of economic policy.

Taxation

6. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the number of people who would face a higher marginal rate of tax and national insurance if the top rate of income tax were raised to 50 per cent. and the employees' national insurance limit were abolished.

19. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the number of people who would face a higher marginal rate of tax and national insurance if the top rate of income tax were raised to 50 per cent. and the employees' national insurance limit were abolished.

Mr. Norman Lamont: If the higher rate of income tax were raised to 50 per cent. and the employees' upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions were abolished, about 3·4 million single people and married couples, about 15 per cent. of the total, would face higher marginal rates of income tax or national insurance.

Mr. Couchman: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that this would raise the marginal rate to 59 per cent. and that such a calamitous rate would encourage another exodus of the skilled and the entrepreneurial? Would it not provide fuel for that pernicious industry of creative personal accounting which was so prevalent when the Labour party was in power?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is, of course, right. That is not the only way in which the Labour party is proposing to increase taxes. As my hon. Friend said, it would put up the marginal rate for nearly 3½ million people, of whom 2 million are basic rate taxpayers, and another 1 million people, half of them pensioners, would lose as a result of the reintroduction of investment income surcharge. Another 24 million people in 12 million couples would also lose as a result of freezing the married couples' allowance and on top of all that, Labour would introduce a local income tax. That would take us straight back to the policies which destroyed incentives and crippled our economy in the 1970s.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: What advice would my right hon. Friend give to the 2 million people who currently have a marginal tax rate of 25 per cent. and who would, nevertheless, be penalised by an extension of national insurance contribution? Is it not significant that 2 million families would be hit in that way if we had a Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is right. I am sure that thanks to him and to my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) raising these matters, the warnings will be heeded and people will think carefully before voting Labour.

Mr. Mullin: To keep the level of hyprocrisy to a minimum, will the Financial Secretary confirm that the percentage of gross domestic product consumed by taxation has increased since his Government came to power?

Mr. Lamont: The percentage has increased, but the percentage taken by income tax has decreased. What we have done—and what the previous Government should have done—is to replace borrowing by sound finance.

Mr. Ashton: Surely, it is the people at the top who live in the biggest and poshest houses—*[Interruption.]*—who will also benefit most from the poll tax. Why should they have cuts at both ends of the scale—from the poll tax and income tax?

Mr. Lamont: I am sorry that I did not hear much of the hon. Gentleman's question, except that I understand from the grin on his face that he is obsessed with people who live in the biggest and poshest houses.

Mr. Marlow: If the purpose of taxation is to raise revenue rather than to punish people, is it not the case that since the Government have reduced the higher rates of taxation they have raised more revenue?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is right. As I have observed before, the Conservative Government have found a new way of soaking and clobbering the rich.

Mr. John Smith: Following the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), can the Financial Secretary confirm that under this Government the proportion of national income paid in taxation has increased from 34·25 per cent. to 37·5 per cent.—a substantial increase? Will he explain what sense of equity there is in imposing on a person on £100,000 a year exactly the same liability in total national insurance as a person on £16,900 a year? In the case of the lower salary, that is 8 per cent. of income whereas in the case of the higher it is 1 per cent. of income. Is that not standing fairness on its head?

Mr. Lamont: I have already answered the question from the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin). On the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions, we have always adhered to the principle that it is important that the contributory principle should be recognised. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman wants to put up taxes, let him do so and not call it national insurance.

Corporation Tax

7. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the basic rate of corporation tax.

Mr. Lamont: A number.

Mr. Colvin: I thank my hon. Friend for that very full reply. Will he confirm that over the past five years, in spite of cutting the rate of corporation tax from 53 per cent. to 35 per cent. for big companies and from 42 per cent. to 25 per cent. for small companies, the revenue actually received by the Exchequer from corporation tax has more than doubled? Although capital allowances have been reduced, investment in manufacturing industry is running at an all-time high. As the patient has responded so well to the treatment, why can we not have a bit more of the same tax-cutting medicine?

Mr. Lamont: I note my hon. Friend's early Budget representation and I am sure that my right hon. Friend has done so as well. As my hon. Friend says, the United Kingdom has led the world in cutting corporation tax rates. We have reduced those rates by 17 points and, as my hon. Friend has said, the yield has soared. Of couse, that is largely because of the sound economy and the great upsurge in profits that we have experienced. We shall certainly keep the matter under review as my hon. Friend suggests. It is also true that investment has in no way suffered. Indeed, investment has boomed since we removed capital allowances and reduced the rate.

Mr. Foulkes: Can the Minister give a clue about whether the number of representations that he has received is nearer to the real level of inflation or to the fiddled figure that is used by his right hon. Friend the Chancellor, which does not include housing costs?

Mr. Lamont: It was an extremely small number.

European Monetary System

8. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect the entry of Spain has had on her Majesty's Government's policy on membership of the European monetary system.

Mr. Lawson: None, though we will watch Spain's progress with interest.

Mr. Squire: In our mutual enthusiasm for joining the exchange rate mechanism, does my right hon. Friend agree that Spain has an inflation rate of nearly 7 per cent. at present and will he confirm that those countries that are within the exchange rate mechanism and have not yet abolished capital controls will possibly face major pressures on their interest rates when they finally do so?

Mr. Lawson: Of course, it is very important that all membr countries of the European Community abolish exchange controls in line with the directive which was agreed last year, and as my hon. Friend will know, most of the countries have to do that by 1 July 1990, including in particular France and Italy. It will be certainly a matter —as I told the Select Committee when I appeared before it on this subject—of very great interest to see how EMS fares after this abolition of exchange controls has taken place. I believe—and the Governor of the Bank of England stated when he gave evidence his belief—that the EMS would successfully survive that. It may be that some modifications will be required, but the EMS will successfully survive the removal of exchange controls by France, Italy and others. We shall have to see. The proof of the pudding will be in the eating.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Whatever fears we may justifiably have about the future economic policy of this country in the event of our joining the exchange rate mechanism, is the Chancellor aware that the greatest fear is that we may enter at too high a rate?

Mr. Lawson: I realise that the Opposition are always in favour of devaluation. I know that they have a policy which is in some way similar to ours, concerning the exchange rate mechanism, but in one particular respect, totally different. They too wish to join the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS and they too believe that there are one or two conditions precedent, but their conditions are to secure the most inflationary environment they can, by devaluation of sterling first, and a change in the arrangements of the EMS to ensure that there is an inflationary climate throughout Europe. That is something which we wholly reject.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my right hon. Friend agree that to suggest that we should have to have a withholding tax as the price for the abolition of exchange controls displays an extraordinary lack of confidence in the operation of a free market? Will he confirm that he will resist that ridiculous proposal?

Mr. Lawson: I can confirm not only that I will resist this proposal, which would be totally harmful, I can confirm that I have been resisting it, and so successfully that there are now a large number of other countries that are resisting it. I am absolutely confident that no such European Community withholding tax will ever come into place.

Value Added Tax

9. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of gross earnings a one-earner family on average earnings with two children paid in value-added tax in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1989.

Mr. Lilley: A married man on average male earnings with two children would have paid approximately 2·7 per cent. of his earnings in VAT in 1978-79 and 5 per cent. in 1988-89.

Mr. Michie: Does the Minister agree that the £5·76 per week that the average family would have had if VAT was still at the same proportion of earnings would be welcome to those families and would help them a little to offset the extra costs that they have to pay in massive mortgage repayments because of the Chancellor's policies?

Mr. Lilley: The significant fact is that over that period, which coincides with the lifetime of this Government, the average married man has had an increase in his real take-home pay—after taking account of prices and VAT—of more than 30 per cent. I do not think that people would have been prepared to trade that for the fiscal regime left behind by the Labour Government.

Mr. Boswell: Does my hon. Friend accept that spending and income must be considered together? Will he remind the House by how much the starting figure at which a comparable family pays income tax has increased in the same period?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and makes a valid point. We have increased the threshold by about a quarter in real terms, thus taking a considerable number of lower paid people out of the income tax regime altogether.

Dr. Marek: The Economic Secretary will have heard the Financial Secretary say a few moments ago that the burden of taxation as a proportion of gross domestic product has increased under this Government. Will he take the next step and admit that that means that the British people have been taxed more heavily in the past 10 years under this Government than they were taxed under the previous Labour Administration?

Mr. Lilley: We inherited public finances that were largely financed by borrowing. Initially, we had to finance part of that by increased taxation but more recently the burden of taxation as a proportion of GDP has been coming down. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made it absolutely clear that if ever a Government were elected—which they will not be—with the policies that appeared in the recent Labour policy review, taxes would go up and up and up.

Interest Rates

10. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from small businesses on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on this subject.

Ms. Quin: Have the Government studied the recent survey by the Forum of Private Business, which shows that small firms are rapidly becoming the victims of high interest rate policies? Are the Government aware of the CBI's industrial survey showing the weakness of small firms' export orders? What advice are the Government now giving to small firms?

Mr. Major: I have seen those reports. There is no doubt that interest rates are uncomfortable. But inflation would be more uncomfortable, would last longer and would be far more damaging. Monetary policy is specifically geared to bear down on inflation and so bring it down. That is in the interests of all business, particularly small business.

Mr. Gow: Is it not the case that excessive monetary growth caused, and diminished monetary growth will cure, the monetary evil of inflation? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he will maintain interest rates at such a level as to persevere in the abatement of inflation until we achieve his declared target of stable prices?

Mr. Major: I can certainly assure my hon. Friend that we have no intention of relaxing on monetary policy until it begins to bear fruit.

Mr. Haynes: When the Prime Minister comes in to the Chamber in a moment or two, will Treasury Ministers have a word with her and tell her to get rid of the Chancellor and farm him off back to the beautiful green fields of Blaby, because he has been a complete failure? He promised that the Government would help small businesses because that was where the jobs would come from and said that that would sort out the problems of the economy.

Mr. Major: I disagree with what I could hear of what the hon. Gentleman said. We cherish the Chancellor and hope to keep him for a long time.

Mr. Bellingham: Is the Chief Secretary aware that in west Norfolk unemployment has come down from a peak of 18 per cent. to less than 6 per cent.? The main reason for that is the success of the small firms sector, which has prospered under the Chancellor's policies. However, is my right hon. Friend aware that that sector is worried about the increase in inflation and supports policies that will bring inflation down?

Mr. Major: I entirely agree. Unemployment has fallen in each and every region of the United Kingdom—without exception—and that has been happening for a considerable period of time. That is a direct result of the policies that my right hon. Friend has been following.

Mr. Chris Smith: Is the Chief Secretary aware that bankruptcies among self-employed sole traders in London

and the south-east have risen by 28 per cent. in the past year, as a direct result of the Government's high interest rate policy? Does he show no concern for the small businesses throughout the country that are being forced to abandon re-equipping and investment decisions and, in many cases, being forced to lay off staff? Has he heard the verdict of the small business man in Gosport, who said that high interest rates were squeezing his business to choking point? Why does he not change his policy before it is too late?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman can rattle his chains all he likes, but the creation of new businesses is now running at an unprecedented rate of 1,300 new businesses every week. The hon. Gentleman can never tell us when that happened under any Labour Government.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the effect of high interest rates on business is substantially mitigated because long-term rates are several points below the level of short-term rates? In addition, does he agree that the long-term interests of all business, the economy and the people of Britain are best served by having high interest rates now, rather than allowing problems to build up for the future, as other Governments would have allowed?

Mr. Major: That is right. It is also pertinent that the profitability of small businesses is at the highest level for 20 years. That means that firms are much less reliant on borrowing and therefore much less sensitive to short-term interest rate changes.

Economic Advisers

11. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list his economic advisers at the Treasury.

18. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list his economic advisers at the Treasury.

Mr. Major: I shall arrange for a list of the numbers in each grade to be published in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Wall: Have the Chancellor's economic advisers concluded whether Sir Alan Walters, the Prime Minister's economic adviser, is correct in saying that the current high and rising rate of inflation is due to the Chancellor's decision to peg the pound to the deutschmark?

Mr. Major: I understand why the hon. Gentleman is seeking to cause trouble, but I have no intention of accommodating him.

Mr. Wardell: Have the Chancellor's advisers yet reached the conclusion that his over-reliance on the rate of interest as an instrument of economic policy is the key to understanding his current mismanagement of the British economy?

Mr. Major: The Chancellor's advice from his advisers is for him. The decisions that are taken are for the Chancellor. I have no intention of referring to the advice that is received.

Mr. Robert Banks: Will the Minister accept advice from me, that the current interest rates are biting quite well enough and that the Government's policy must be given time before we take any other action that may or may not be necessary? It is essential that the economy is given proper time in which to respond to current levels.

Mr. Major: As I said earlier, my right hon. Friend will certainly use monetary policy to bear down on inflation. I give my hon. Friend that categorical assurance.

Mr. Batiste: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a sensible person should take advice from as many sources as possible, and that he will be judged not by the noises that come from his advisers but by the quality of the judgments that he makes based upon that advice?

Mr. Major: My hon Friend makes an extremely good point. It is not that long ago that we had some advice from 364 distinguished economists who were entirely wrong. I can certainly offer my hon. Friend the assurance that none of them work for the Treasury.

Mr. John Smith: Is it not clear that the Chancellor is in need of some good advice, in particular not to make foolish interventions in rail disputes and not to threaten even further cuts in investment in our railway system, which is already inadequate because of years of underinvestment by the Government?

Mr. Major: Even by the standards of the Opposition Front Bench, that is a remarkably misguided statement. The growth in investment in British Rail has been 75 per cent., and we now have the largest investment programme in British Rail since the advent of steam. That is a reality that the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his hon. Friends might do well to understand.

The following is the information:

1 Chief Economic Adviser at Grade 1A
1 Deputy Chief Economic Adviser at Grade 2
4 Grade 3 (Under Secretary) Economists
12 Grade 5 (Senior Economic Advisers)
31 Grade 7 (Economic Advisers)
27 Economic/Senior Economic Assistants

Earnings

12. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage increase in the real take-home pay of a married man on male average earnings with two children between 1978-79 and 1989-90

Mr. Norman Lamont: Take-home pay for a married man with two children on average male earnings is 32 per cent. higher in real terms in 1989-90 than in 1978-79.

Mr. Curry: Is it not clear that the ordinary working family has benefited most from a policy of high economic growth and a reduction in taxation? Therefore, are not the Government acting in the interests of the ordinary working family in making their counter-inflation strategy the centrepiece of their economic policy, even when it involves difficult decisions such as keeping down pay in the public sector?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is right. The increase in earnings in real terms, after prices and after VAT, to the average person is worth about £53 a week more at today's prices than in 1978-79. The same is true also for the person on half average earnings. His real earnings are now about 25 per cent. higher. That is an increase in the past seven

years of 3·2 per cent. per annum, which compares with a total increase of about 4 per cent. during the period when the Labour party was in office.

European Monetary System

13. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on what deutschmark/sterling exchange rate he would treat as appropriate to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system and as to what other considerations would affect his decision.

Mr. Lawson: I refer the hon. Member to the statement by the Prime Minister to the House on 29 June on the outcome of last week's European Council in Madrid.

Mr. Bruce: That statement showed that the Prime Minister took the view that we should not join the exchange rate mechanism until the completion of the single market, which is likely to be well after 1992. Does that mean that business and industry must wait another 10 years before the time is right?

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman will have to wait and see. My right hon. Friend reaffirmed our commitment to join the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS but said that first inflation would have to come down and that there would have to be satisfactory progress on other measures involved in stage one of the Delors programme, including in particular the abolition of exchange controls. We in this country have been working for that for a long time, and got an agreed directive last year.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Walker: Has my right hon. Friend read the report in the *Scottish Sunday Express* about the crisis of confidence throughout Scottish business—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] and the risk of job losses and a reduction of investment in Scotland—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."]—which is the direct result of the Opposition and the Scottish media supporting the—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."]—flawed, fraudulent and unworkable proposals for an assembly or parliament in Scotland, leading to—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."]—increased risk of separation of the kind that we expect from the Socialists —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must make his question brief.

Mr. Walker: Has my right hon. Friend realised that the benefits of the best financial climate that Scotland has enjoyed since 1945, due to her policies and leadership, is now at risk? What can she do to help the Scots?

The Prime Minister: I saw the report to which my hon. Friend refers, which said that half the Scottish companies interviewed would either cut local investment or move their headquarters south if devolution or independence came to pass. Scotland has done well on inward investment and during the period of Conservative Government, more jobs have been created and it has the second highest rate of earnings in the whole of the United Kingdom. I hope that Scotland will see fit to keep this prosperity and good prospects for the future.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister update the House on all the constructive efforts she has made since Tuesday to resolve the rail dispute?

The Prime Minister: As I told the right hon. Gentleman, the rail dispute is a matter between the board of British Rail—*[Interruption.]*—and the unions. As he knows, the national tribunal is meeting today to hear and consider the matter referred to it by the Transport Salaried Staffs Association. Alas, it is not also considering the NUR and ASLEF issues because they have not referred their matter to that arbitration panel.

Mr. Kinnock: I think that the words the Prime Minister was searching for when answering my question were, "None, Sir." If the Prime Minister ever used the railways or the tubes, she would know that travellers constantly suffer dirt, delays and discomfort because of under-investment. How does she think that yesterday's threat to cut investment will help to resolve the current dispute or help to improve services for those travellers?

The Prime Minister: Has not the right hon. Gentleman forgotten one fundamental thing, which is that the unions are driving the customers away—*[Interruption.]*—because they are not operating the railways? The right hon. Gentleman will have heard the Chief Secretary in Treasury questions pointing out that investment in British Rail has increased under Conservative rule, particularly in the electrification of lines—the investment of the last two years is the biggest programme we have ever had and the prospects for the next four years are good. It is the unions which are driving their customers away, both passengers and freight. It is a tragedy that railway men will lose their jobs if they go on like this.

Mr. Kinnock: There was not a single word of truth in the Prime Minister's answer. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister confirm, for the sake of honesty, that under her Government investment in railways has been 25 per cent. lower in real terms than under the last Labour Government, that the best level of investment ever achieved by her Government was lower than the worst level of investment ever achieved in real terms under a Labour Government, and that the claims made yesterday by the Chancellor of a 50 per cent. increase is an increase from the lowest level of investment in railways in post-war history?

The Prime Minister: I do not know how the right hon. Gentleman can believe that people or freight can travel on railways—*[Interruption.]*—when the railways are on strike. Of course they cannot. Railway men are depriving themselves of jobs.

On the question of investment, the Government have spent in real terms half as much again each year on rail electrification as the Labour Government. With regard to overall investment, in terms of 1989-90 prices, the greatest years for investment in British Rail were 1987-88 at £594 million, 1988-89 at £629 million, and 1989-90 at £781 million.

Mr. Barry Field: Does my right hon. Friend agree that even the average reader of "Thomas the Tank Engine" understands that it is not possible, on the one hand, to call on the Government to defeat inflation and, on the other to call on the Government to give in to the rail strikers' pay demands without stoking up inflation? Will my right hon. Friend recommend a serious economic policy to the Leader of the Opposition or send Mr. Controller to have a word with him?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the Labour party will complain about the level of inflation and then support every strike to get increased wages.

Q2. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kirkwood: Has the Prime Minister yet had time to study the findings of the British Medical Association-commissioned Gallup poll on the National Health Service which shows that the vast majority of the British public, including many members of the Conservative party, are opposed to and will not accept the far-reaching structural changes to the NHS that the Prime Minister is suggesting in "Working for Patients" and in the new general practitioners' contract? Would it not be wiser to stand back and abandon the big bang approach to changing the NHS in favour of a much more considered evolutionary process which seeks to build on the very many strengths of the existing National Health Service?

The Prime Minister: No. I never know whether we are being accused of not running a good enough Health Service so that it needs reform or whether we are being accused of running such a good Health Service that no reform is needed. Hon. Members ask for one course of action one day and ask a different question on another. We are running a very good Health Service—the best that we have ever had. We are hoping to improve it still further. Many of the improvements that we have introduced have been opposed at the time, but they have resulted in releasing increased resources for the patient and better patient care. This reform will be no exception. It will result in great improvements for the patient.

Q3. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Peacock: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity today to read the report in *The Daily Telegraph* which says that the Governor of the Bank of England feels very uncomfortable with the aggressive advertising techniques of the financial institutions? Does she agree that the use of aggressive advertising to persuade people to borrow money to spend is of grave concern?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I tend to share the governor's concern and I dislike seeing so many temptations for people to spend more than they can really afford. I hope that they will resist such temptations. It is not wise to spend more than one can really afford.

Mr. Foot: Can the right hon. Lady give us any explanation—maybe it must be a psychoanalytical one—of why she should always be at her most dogmatic or strident on subjects such as the railways, football or the National Health Service about which she knows least?

The Prime Minister: Having been opposite the right hon. Gentleman for many years I would not say that he was the person who knew mostest about anything.

Q4. **Mr. French:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. French: Will my right hon. Friend find time to consider the merits of the rents into mortgages scheme recently propounded by the Scottish Minister responsible for housing? Does she agree that such a scheme would find a welcome in other parts of the United Kingdom, including the south-west?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I greatly welcome the rents into mortgages trial scheme that is being run in Scotland because there are a number of houses there where the Government are the landlord and we thought that it was a good way in which to try out such a scheme. I hope that many people will take advantage of it to purchase their houses and that the percentage of owner-occupation in that country will go up. Credit on housing is a very good investment indeed.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Is the Prime Minister aware of the growing concern in Fermanagh about the recent decision to open the Lackie bridge, which has been closed for some time to protect the citizens there? At a time of growing bombing in the Province, will she provide the security that the people need?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, there was a decision some time ago to close certain checkpoints because we thought that the soldiers involved at those checkpoints could be better deployed in the area to give greater protection to the people. That decision has now been implemented because we believe that it represents a better use of the armed forces for the protection of the people.

Q7. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the recent accord between the MPLA and UNITA in Angola is a most welcome step towards peace in that country after a civil war that has lasted 14 years? Will she assure the House of the Government's persisting aim to achieve stability and prosperity in that region, not least by holding the next South African President to his pledge to hold to sensible progress towards democracy in his country?

The Prime Minister: I join with my hon. Friend in hoping very much that the recent accord in Angola will be implemented and that it will lead to free elections. That will be the crucial test of whether it is working. If it is, that, together with independence for Namibia, will augur very well for the future of southern Africa. We have yet to see if that particular accord will result in free elections.

Q8. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wardell: What advice could the Prime Minister give to my constituents and hon. Members about elderly people who, without asessment of any kind, enter private nursing homes and then find that their families cannot afford to pick up the bill for the difference between what the DSS pays for keeping that person in the home and the price charged by the home?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, under the income support scheme, there is provision for people to enter private nursing homes. A maximum amount is payable and homes are available which fall within that amount so that people may enjoy those facilities. Of course, people should inquire about the price before they go in, and it is impossible for the DSS to pick up every single bill for every residential home, no matter how expensive. That could not be done under any Government. There are more people in residential homes now than there have been for a long time. Therefore, more people are enjoying a standard of comfort which was previously not available to them.

Q9. **Mr. Thorne:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thorne: Will my right hon. Friend find time to consider the remarks made by Mr. Russell Hopkins, the general manager of University hospital of Wales, Cardiff when speaking at the BMA conference at Swansea? He accused the BMA of spreading fear, apprehension and uncertainty among the chronically sick, elderly and infirm through its disgraceful publicity campaign. Will my right hon. Friend denounce such behaviour?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I am glad that some doctors and managers have the courage to speak out against the scare tactics which are frighening a number of patients totally unnecessarily. This year the Government have spent three times the amount of money that was spent 10 years ago. In our 10 years in power we have also increased the number of nurses and doctors. The reforms are intended to bring about even better patient care. When we put them into operation, they will do just that.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 10 JULY—Estimates day (3rd allotted day). There will be debates on Department of Energy administration and on civil aviation services. Details of the Estimates concerned and the relevant Select Committee reports will be given in the *Official Report*.

At Ten o'clock the Question will be put on all outstanding Estimates.

TUESDAY 11 JULY and WEDNESDAY 12 JULY—Remaining stages of the Finance Bill.

At the end on Tuesday: motion on the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order, motion on the Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payment Schemes) (Amendment) Order. At the end on Wednesday: motion to take note of EC document on irradiation of foodstuffs. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 13 JULY—There will be a debate on Hong Kong and China on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 14 JULY—There will be a debate on foreign affairs on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 17 JULY—Opposition day. There will be a debate on an Opposition motion. Subject for debate to be announced.

[Monday 10 July
Estimate: Class VI, Vote 3 (Department of Energy: Administration)
Relevant Select Committee Report:
Energy Committee's Fourth Report Session 1988-89 (HC 435) on the Department of Energy's Spending Plans 1989-90
Estimate: Class VIII, Vote 2 (Department of Transport: Administration and Transport Services), so far as it relates to Civil Aviation Services.
Relevant Select Committee Reports:
Transport Committee's First Report Session 1988-89 (HC 198) on Air Traffic Control Safety
Transport Committee's Third Special Report Session 1988-89 (HC 407), the Government Observations on the First Report of the Committee, Session 1988-89
Wednesday 12 July
Relevant European Community Document
10377/88 Irradiation of foodstuffs
Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
HC 15-viii (1988-89), para 5, HC 15-xvii (1988-89), para 5 and HC 15-xxi (1988-89), para 6.]

Mr. Dobson: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement and, on behalf of hon. Members from both sides of the House, I thank him for responding so promptly and arranging a debate on Hong Kong and China and a separate one on foreign affairs.

Can the right hon. Gentleman be equally prompt in securing a debate on the impact of the National Health Service review on Wales? The debate could be conducted in the House or he could persuade his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales to agree to a debate in the Welsh Grand Committee.

Has the right hon. Gentleman got any further in the discussions that he said he was having about the possibility of establishing a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, or some alternative arrangements? It is some time since he told us that he was having those discussions and we should like to know the outcome.

When are we likely to receive the long-promised statement on the Government's response to the Griffiths report on community care? Will we receive it next week?

Finally, when will we get the long-promised debate on the Government's proposal to substitute student loans for student grants?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman asked me five questions about the business for next week. I am grateful for what he said about the two days that I have managed to find for the important debates on Hong Kong and China and on foreign affairs. I hope that it is for the convenience of the House to hold separate debates on those two subjects next week.

I recognise that we have had a number of debates on the Health Service; it is a subject to which we shall return from time to time, but I cannot promise a debate on the Health Service with particular reference to Wales. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would welcome a debate on the subject in the Welsh Grand Committee, but its timing should be left to the usual channels.

I have nothing to add to what I told the hon. Gentleman some time ago about the Scottish Affairs Select Committee. I explained that I have been considering the points that some of his hon. Friends raised with me in the course of a useful discussion. I have to confirm that I do not see an easy solution, but I am still looking into the matter.

With regard to the Griffiths report, we are now finalising our proposals on community care and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health very much hopes to be able to make a statement announcing our conclusions next week. As I have said before, there will be a debate in Government time at a suitable point thereafter.

As I said last week, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and I have made it clear that we would welcome a debate on top-up loans. Again, its timing is best left for discussion through the usual channels.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): During Treasury questions today a Labour Front Bench spokesman expressed concern about an alleged increase in the burden of taxation during the past 10 years. Would my right hon. Friend consider it possible to provide enough time during the remaining stages of the Finance Bill next week for the Labour party to clarify its position on this issue? If its anxiety is genuine, it will presumably welcome further tax cuts introduced by the Government and abandon all the proposals contained in its recent policy document.

Mr. Wakeham: I have never felt that lack of time was the principal cause of the Opposition's not making their position clear. There will certainly be time for them to advance any arguments which they think relevant and in order in the debates that we have arranged for next week.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Why has a major Government review of tourism, which has been a year in preparation, been slipped out this afternoon by way of a written answer instead of in a statement to the House, after which hon. Members representing affected constituencies could question the Minister concerned, as was possible on the last occasion when the Government announced such a review? Are we to have an early debate on this? Why has this deplorable procedure been used in a case which arouses a great deal of interest throughout England?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept for a minute what the hon. Gentleman says. A written answer is a perfectly proper way of making an announcement. Of course, whether to make such an announcement by written answer or by oral statement is a matter of judgment that must take into account all the other pressures on the time of the House. My right hon. Friend gave the matter proper consideration, but I shall see to it that the hon. Gentleman's views are conveyed to him.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Will there be time before the summer recess to debate the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of beer? Although a number of my hon. Friends and I are opposed to the Commission's recommendations, we are not wholly in favour of the status quo. As there seems to be some doubt about the direction that Government policy is likely to take in response to the report, would it not be a good idea if my right hon. Friend sought the opinion of hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber?

Mr. Wakeham: At this stage, this is a matter for my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to consider. He is studying the report and considering the views expressed by hon. Members and others. It is right for him first to come to his conclusion, and for that conclusion to be announced; then we shall consider how best to proceed.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that we should discuss the proposals of the Department of Transport for changing the orange badge parking scheme for disabled people? It should include thalidomide victims who have no arms and who have great difficulty carrying shopping. Other deserving groups should also be included. Abuse of the scheme must be ended because it damages the scheme, but is the right hon. Gentleman aware that more than 250,000 disabled people will lose their orange badges when the Minister's scheme is implemented? Hon. Members on both sides of the House will have thousands of complaints in the next year or two. Could we have a debate, please?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not sure that the right hon. Gentleman should be too alarmist about this matter. As he knows, the orange badge scheme was designed to help those with severe mobility problems. We are working to improve the scheme and to cut abuse for the sake of those who depend upon it for freedom of movement.

Mr. Ashley: I am not being alarmist.

Mr. Wakeham: It seems that the right hon. Gentleman, with his ingenuity, should be able to raise some of these issues in the debate that will take place tomorrow.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Knowing my right hon. Friend's personal and professional interest in our workings and in our working conditions, may I ask him whether he has received a copy of the parliamentary Labour party's proposals on this score? Will he consider providing an early opportunity for those of us who would like to join in the debate on the proposals, which include a three-day week—shades of 1974—provision for statutory instruments to be considered in Committee and various other measures that are apparently designed to secure not greater examination of the Executive but greater participation in our "pluralist political culture"?

Mr. Wakeham: I have not received a copy of the PLP's report, but I shall be interested to receive a copy. If it is as my hon. Friend has suggested, I am not sure that it will help us get up for the summer recess too quickly.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): The Leader of the House will be aware of my interest, having legislated for the scheme, in the orange badge parking concessions for severely disabled people. Would it not be more satisfactory for there to be an oral statement next week about the very special predicaments of people with no arms, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) said, including many thalidomide victims?

Secondly, can I ask the Leader of the House if he can say any more about the timing of the forthcoming debate on parliamentary pensions?

Mr. Wakeham: The Minister who is responsible for the orange badge scheme and the question of thalidomide victims is consulting medical opinion on the circumstances of certain people with these unfortunate disabilities. Any statement or announcement to the House will be better made after conclusions have been arrived at.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) knows that I have been trying to find a time convenient to everyone for a debate on parliamentary pensions. I am most anxious that the debate should take place. As soon as I can make an announcement, I shall do so.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that an industrial dispute which concerns and harms the interests of employers or employees only is one thing but that an industrial dispute that results in misery and suffering for thousands of members of the general public, who are unconnected with the merits of the dispute, is another? Can we have a debate on how we might alter the law to protect the public against irresponsibility by either side in an industrial dispute?

Mr. Wakeham: I fully recognise my hon. Friend's concern, the concern of his constituents and the concern of many of us who have constituents faced with circumstances similar to those that he describes. The public sector unions, especially in a monopoly or near-monopoly industry, should recognise their special responsibilities to the general public. Current strikes in public services are a disgraceful example of unions letting down the public, whom they are there to serve.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department has published and circulated a statement on blasphemy, would it not be a good idea to have a debate

on the Law Commission's 1985 report, which recommended abolition of this antique, out-dated and wholly useless legislation, so that we could come to some conclusions about it? At the same time we could express strongly our opposition to and condemnation of the bombing of book-shops, one of which occurred recently where "The Satanic Verses" was on sale, albeit in a muted sort of way without any big campaign. The bombing of bookshops and attempts to suppress literature is redolent of Germany in the 1930s.

Mr. Wakeham: I agree that there would be considerable value in such a debate, as the House could express its grave concern and disquiet about some of the activities. As the hon. Gentleman well knows, the blasphemy laws have not been of much value or use in our system, so it certainly is not a sensible idea to extend them. The question whether they should be abolished is not for me, but they will not provide much of a solution to the current difficulties.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that when the clergy ordination Measure comes before the House in the next two or three weeks, following an excellent debate in the House of Lords, many hon. Members will wish to take part in the debate? Will he ensure that the debate takes place at a reasonable time and is not shunted off to 4 o'clock in the morning?

Mr. Wakeham: There was a good debate in another place, and I hope that this House will live up to my hon. Friend's expectations. I shall try, as I always try, to bring important matters before the House at a convenient time. However, I am sure that my hon. Friend recognises that, especially at this time of year, I have some difficulty in achieving that objective.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Will the right hon. Gentleman explain his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) about a Welsh Grand Committee debate on the National Health Service? Does he recall that during business questions on 22 June he promised my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) that he would arrange a debate on that matter before the recess? There are only three weeks to go and this matter is very important. It is essential that Welsh Members discuss the NHS as it affects Wales and also the proposals for Wales.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the British Medical Association met in Swansea this week? We want to discuss with the Secretary of State the BMA's declaration against the Government's policy. It is not true to say that the matter can be negotiated through the usual channels because the usual channels are blocked. The right hon. Gentleman usually keeps his promises. Will he keep this promise and arrange a Welsh Grand Committee meeting so that we can fully discuss the problems with the Secretary of State?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not sure that my recollection of business questions on 22 June is the same as that of the hon. Gentleman. I am happy for the matter to be discussed through the usual channels. I have more confidence in that system than the hon. Gentleman appears to have at present.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): In view of Britain's success in creating jobs during the past three years, does my right hon. Friend agree that rather than the European Community giving us a social charter, there is an argument for Britain giving it a jobs charter? Will he find time, as soon as possible, for a debate on the employment aspects of the social charter proposed by the European Commission, so that the attitudes of the two sides of the House towards job creation can be examined, especially in respect of the damage done to employment by strikes in the public sector?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree that the Government's record on creating jobs is something to which all other countries in Europe could look with a degree of envy. It would make a suitable subject for debate, but I cannot promise one in the immediate future.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to early-day motion 1018, relating to the dispute at Ever-Sure Textiles Limited, Sheffield.

[That this House deplores the action of management at Ever-Sure Textiles Limited, Sheffield, in refusing to accept recognition of the Transport and General Workers Union, even though 160 out of the 180 members of the workforce voted by ballot for trade union recognition and 87 per cent. of the workers voted in favour of industrial action following management's decision; condemns the dismissal of about 28 warehouse staff for taking part in the industrial action; is shocked to learn that the honourable Member for Sheffield, Hallam lists in the registry of Members' Interests that he is a director of this company where some of the women machinists have a basic wage of £61 per week; and calls upon him to put pressure on his fellow directors to allow the rights of workers for official trade union representation, which was confirmed in a democratic ballot.]

It has attracted 61 signatures to date.

Although it may appear to be just a local problem, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the workers involved have gone through the democratic rules laid down by the Government to obtain trade union recognition, but have been ignored by the reactionary management of that company? As I was not successful in obtaining an Adjournment debate, will the right hon. Gentleman consider arranging a short debate so that we can express our concern and gain some information about the Government's stance on this matter?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman will know that at this time of the year there are a number of occasions on which he can raise that matter on the Floor of the House without my having to find time for a debate, which I am sure he will recognise is difficult as we approach the summer recess. It is for companies to decide on their bargaining systems, including which union, if any, they wish to negotiate with in collective bargaining.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): My right hon. Friend will have heard the exchanges during Prime Minister's Question Time on the subject of railway investment, when the Leader of the Opposition seemed to doubt the validity of some of the answers that he was given. The Government have a proud record on railway investment and I am continually being lobbied by my constituents and other bodies urging that the Government should do more on that subject. Our investment has been linked to the performance of British Rail and its staff but now that performance is sadly lacking. Will my right hon. Friend

[Mr. Michael Jack]

consider having a debate on railway investment so that we can put straight our record on that matter and learn exactly what are the Opposition's criteria? Perhaps they would invest with no performance at all.

Mr. Wakeham: That would make a good subject for a debate. At Prime Minister's Question Time, the Leader of the Opposition, as is his right, asked questions and my right hon. Friend gave him answers. I hope that he is a wiser man as a result. However, I cannot promise an early debate on the matter raised by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Will the Leader of the House find time next week for the Home Secretary to come to the House and make a statement on the Home Office report published this week on the future of section 11 funding of local authorities and the Home Office's continued failure to make up its mind on whether to give relief to my hard-pressed ratepayers by paying out the money due to the borough of Brent under section 11, as recommended by Sir David Lane?

Mr. Wakeham: If my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary wants to make a statement to the House I shall certainly find time, but the hon. Gentleman can find a way of raising that matter in the House without my assistance. However, I shall refer to my right hon. Friend the point that he has made.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Will my right hon. Friend make it clear that despite Thursday's debate being on a motion for the Adjournment of the House, the subject will be Hong Kong and China, not other foreign affairs matters, and that any other foreign affairs matters that hon. Members wish to raise will be debated on Friday?

Secondly, when does my right hon. Friend expect to respond to the recommendation of the Select Committee on European Legislation and the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service that the House should debate the Delors report?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not have anything further to say on the latter point, but we shall bear it in mind. The Delors report is an appropriate subject for debate and no doubt there will be an opportunity to debate it in the House.

On the foreign affairs debate and the debate on Hong Kong and China, my hon. Friend is correct. I announced Thursday's debate on Hong Kong and China, and Friday's debate is a more general foreign affairs debate. What is or is not in order in those debates is not a matter for me.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): In view of the Government's continuing failure to set up a Scottish parliament or even a Scottish Select Committee, will the Leader of the House consider going up to Inverness tomorrow to observe the work of the Scottish Constitutional Convention, which he will see at first hand is much more representative of Scottish opinion than the House, which continues to ignore the democratic wishes of the majority of the Scottish people?

Mr. Wakeham: Unfortunately, my duties in the House will detain me here tomorrow, but if I had an opportunity to go to Inverness which, from time to time, I enjoy very much, I am not sure that going to the convention would be the most profitable thing to do.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will my right hon. Friend find time in next week's parliamentary agenda to debate industrial relations in the light of the strikes on trains and buses, and the prospect of a strike in the docks, so that the Labour party can explain to the public through the means of the House how it would end those strikes, particularly bearing in mind that during yesterday's debate on training, the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen said not one word on their policy on that subject either.

Mr. Wakeham: As my hon. Friend will have noted, I have announced an Opposition day debate for Monday 17 July, which is as far in advance as I can manage, to give the Opposition as much time as possible to get a policy together. If the Opposition want to debate that policy, I am sure that the House will be interested to listen.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): What will the Leader of the House do to enable right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House to answer the growing list of questions from constituents about the implementation of the poll tax? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the latest estimate by Bradford city council officials is that the poll tax will be £343 per person—which represents a massive increase under that Conservative-controlled authority? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that many people who have been designated as the "responsible person" have no income and are desperately worried about how they will pay? Is he aware that the parents of children aged over 18 in secondary education, with no income of their own, will be liable for their children's poll tax, and that people absent from the United Kingdom for up to one year will also be liable? When will right hon. and hon. Members have an opportunity to put questions to the Secretary of State for the Environment, in the hope that he will give some sensible replies?

Mr. Wakeham: If the hon. Gentleman continues asking questions of such an alarmist nature, it is no wonder that some people in Bradford will be misled as to the true position. I am unaware of any major problems that remain unresolved, but if the hon. Gentleman will write to me, I shall do my best to answer him.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I support the call of my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) for a statement or early debate on the British Rail and London Underground strikes. They are causing desperate inconvenience and suffering to my constituents and those of other right hon. and hon. Members—including pensioners from Northolt, who seek to take their holidays from Wednesday to Wednesday to save money. Such a debate could also consider the suggestion that many pensioners have made to me, which is that the men and women who work on the railways are losing nothing from their pay packets by striking on Wednesdays, because they make up their income by working overtime on the Tuesdays before and the Thursdays after the strikes —so they make no real effort or sacrifice.

Mr. Wakeham: I fully understand my hon. Friend's concern about the grave inconvenience caused to many of his constituents and about the strike generally. The strike is for British Rail and the unions to resolve, and I hope

that they will do so quickly in the interests of all commuters. The Government have done what they can to assist commuters to get to work. The extra measures that we announced last week were generally a success. Emergency parking in central London was well used, without creating significant extra congestion, and we are considering the use of further park-and-ride sites.

We urge the public to use car-sharing more and to stagger their journeys, so that more people may get to work. By far the most satisfactory way out will be for the union to recognise its responsibilities and to reach agreement with the employers.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motions 1080 and 1081, in the name of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt).

[That this House congratulates the BBC's staff for their courageous action in striking.

That this House notes that there is no intention on the part of the BBC strikers to improve productivity or efficiency and that the action taken has hit hardest at the elderly, house bound, lonely and low paid who struggle to pay the present exorbitant licence fee.]

Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a debate—short or otherwise—on both early-day motions, which may allow the hon. Member for Langbaurgh to explain his somewhat contradictory views, which clearly must have been tendered in the spirit of mockery? Such a debate would allow right hon. and hon. Members to express their undistorted views about the opinions of BBC staff, as opposed to those of BBC management. It would also provide an opportunity to pass comment on the summer of discontent that the Government have undoubtedly provoked in a desperate quest to regain some form of electoral advantage.

Mr. Wakeham: That is not a particularly helpful comment. Industrial relations between the BBC and its employees on various subjects, including pay and conditions, is a matter for the BBC. It is for the BBC to decide how best to use the resources available to it, within the constraints of the index-linked licence fee. The Government's concern is to take measures to bear down on inflation, which is the major problem that we must overcome.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): My right hon. Friend will recall that I have asked several times whether he will find time for a debate on the Lord Chancellor's proposals for the reform of the legal profession before the Government's response to the many recommendations that they have received has crystallised. Can my right hon. Friend say when a White Paper on this important subject is likely to be published and whether he will find time for a debate before that happens?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend has been very patient and has asked me a number of times to find time for a debate. I regret that I have not been able to do so. Ministers hope to take decisions before the summer recess. I am sure that we will return to these matters at an appropriate time.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I add my plea to that of the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste). Surely it is wrong that proposals of this magnitude, affecting people's rights in law, are debated throughout the country and decisions are made, but there is no debate in the House. Is not the position even worse, because in the meantime, people's rights to justice deteriorate as the legal aid system provides less support. A person who needs justice must be either very rich or have little money—otherwise, too often, the courts are not available. Surely we must have a debate on legal reform and legal aid before the recess. Can the right hon. Gentleman promise at least that?

Mr. Wakeham: I regret that I cannot. The hon. and learned Gentleman is a fair man and he would be the first to agree that record amounts of money are being spent by the Government on legal aid. Of course, these are matters for debate, but that point should not be overlooked.

The Government have issued a Green Paper for discussion of the procedures. A final decision has not been made. When the Government decide what to do, there will be ample time to discuss the matter. If it involves legislative proposals, the House will have a full opportunity to discuss, debate and decide the issues.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): My right hon. Friend was not able to announce a subject for the Opposition day debate on Monday week. Given the comments of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) on the dispute at Ever-Sure and given the unwarranted and unprovoked attacks on the integrity of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick), will my right hon. Friend confirm that, if the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) requests an Opposition day debate on the dispute, he will agree to it? Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the Opposition do not request that debate, it will mean that they are simply indulging in petty political point scoring?

Mr. Wakeham: It is for the Opposition to decide the subject for debate on that day. If they want to debate that issue, they are entitled to do so. I recognise the force of my hon. Friend's comments. We can draw our own conclusions from the Opposition's actions.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clywd, South-West): I refer the Leader of the House to the *Official Report* of 22 June, when he promised my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) that he would do his best to have a Welsh Grand Committee before the end of the Session. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that we gave two weeks' and three weeks' notice respectively through the usual channels and neither date was acceptable to the Secretary of State for Wales? I suspect that if the Secretary of State were as keen to discuss the Health Service as he claims, he would have found time to debate that matter in the House. I suggest that that notice is sufficient. I ask the Leader of the House to do better than his best and to prevail on the Secretary of State for Wales to overcome his natural fear to discuss a subject such as the Health Service in Wales and have a debate before the end of the Session.

Mr. Wakeham: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming that what I said in that debate was not as his hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) suggested. I said that I would do my best. I will have discussions though the usual channels and I never do less than my best in these matters.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I add my comments to those of my hon. Friends the Members for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) and for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). There is serious concern all over Wales about the future of the Health Service and the Government's review proposals. The subject has produced a large mail bag for me and all other Welsh Members. I was heavily involved in the by-elections earlier this year in Pontypridd and Vale of Glamorgan and I know that the Health Service is the main issue in politics today for thousands of people. We should have an opportunity in the Welsh Grand Committee to discuss the effect of the proposals on Wales. We normally have four Committee sittings a year, but this year we have had only three. Why do the Secretary of State for Wales and the Government not allow us the opportunity to discuss the Health Service in the Welsh Grand Committee?

Mr. Wakeham: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has reminded the House of his activities in the by-elections. I thought that he would hope that we would forget all about them. I recognise that he has added his voice to those of his hon. Friends wanting a debate on the Health Service in Wales. The Government's record on Wales and the Health Service would make a suitable subject for debate, but such matters must be negotiated through the usual channels, as I have said that I will seek to do. I cannot make a firm promise.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Will the Leader of the House do me a favour? Will he grab hold of his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy, in between his flying in and out of Heathrow—which he does too often —and have a word with him on coming to the House and making a statement about a pit closure in my constituency? Everything has been agreed, so there is no problem about that. However, British Coal wants to use the land for housing development, whereas the people of the area want jobs. There is nothing else. I do not want the Leader of the House to tell me that he will have a word with his right hon. Friend because I have already done that. Let us have the Secretary of State here and let me have the opportunity to question him to see what help he will give my constituents on this problem.

Mr. Wakeham: If the hon. Gentleman has tried his persuasive best, I do not think that there is much more I can do to assist. I know my limitations.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry to raise this point of order, but the matter is most important. You called during business questions the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) who, for reasons best known to himself, referred to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) and to the comments made earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie). I am sure that you will recollect that my hon. Friend the Member for Heeley made no comment about the hon. Member for Hallam. I am sure that you will also confirm that the early-day motion concerning Ever-Sure Textiles Limited and the dispute of members of the Transport and General Workers Union seeking union recognition refers to the hon. Member for Hallam. However, it must have been entirely in order for those references to be made as they have been accepted by the Table Office and, indirectly, yourself. I hope, therefore, that you will make it clear that the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Heeley and the early-day motion did not constitute an unprovoked attack on the integrity of the hon. Member for Hallam, which was what the hon. Member for Isle of Wight claimed. I hope that you will be able to clarify the record.

Mr. Speaker: If the comments of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) had been out of order, I would have stopped him. However, they were not and I cannot say more than that.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Passenger and Goods Vehicles (Recording Equipment) Regulations 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

ESTIMATES DAY

[2ND ALLOTTED DAY]

ESTIMATES 1989-90

Class XI, Vote 3

[Relevant documents: First Report from the Home Affairs Committee of Session 1988-89 on the Forensic Science Service (House of Commons Paper No. 26), the Government Reply thereto (Cm. 699), the Third Report of Session 1988-89 on Higher Police Training and the Police Staff College (House of Commons Paper No. 110) and the Fourth Report of Session 1988-89 on Home Office Expenditure (House of Commons Paper No. 314), so far as it relates to common police services.]—[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]

HOME OFFICE ADMINISTRATION, IMMIGRATION AND POLICE SUPPORT SERVICES, ENGLAND AND WALES

Common Police Services

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a further sum, not exceeding £259,162,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1990 for expenditure by the Home Office on court services, other services related to crime, probation and after-care, police, fire, civil defence, control of immigration and nationality, issue of passports, etc., other protective and community services, certain broadcasting services, data protection and other miscellaneous services including grants in aid and international subscriptions; and on administration (excluding prisons).

4.9 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I welcome this opportunity to introduce a debate on common police services and, in so doing, to discuss three of the reports of my Select Committee on Home Affairs this Session. My Committee has reported on the forensic science service and the police staff college, both of which are paid for from the common police services fund and has devoted part of our report on Home Office expenditure to common police services.

The common police services fund is used as a means of paying for those centrally organised police activities which individual forces could not finance on their own. These services so funded have been described as the infrastructure of the police service. Under the provisions of the Police Act 1964, the Secretary of State is empowered to contribute to these services as a means of promoting the efficiency of the police. Although small in monetary terms and in relation to overall expenditure on the police, common police services currently include a variety of activities essential to the effectiveness of the police service as a whole.

Because the police service is based upon a tripartite structure dating from Victorian times, it is difficult, if not impossible, for the Government to introduce new techniques in policing or to achieve standard practice across all 43 police forces in England and Wales. It has been a feature of all three of our Committee reports that we have proposed ways of creating greater unity of purpose and common approaches to policing, without which the present police structure might fail to meet the needs of the 1990s.

Our first report, made in February of this year, was on the forensic science service. The Committee discovered that the service has been under-funded. Its resources had not increased in line with the increasing volume of recorded crime and the enhanced capacity of the laboratories for forensic analysis. The shortfall in funding had led to the demoralisation of staff and general dissatisfaction with the services provided by forensic science laboratories to individual police forces.

The under-funding was the more serious, in the view of the Committee, because we had evidence that in particular cases the use of forensic science could lead to great savings in police resources by quickly confirming the guilt or establishing the innocence of a subject. Forensic science analysis can have a direct bearing on the use of expensive police resources by enabling them to be better directed. Moreover, we also had evidence that, in some cases giving rise to major public anxiety, forensic analysis has contributed to a speedy solution of the crime and the allaying of much disquiet.

The usefulness of forensic science is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the development of the DNA profiling test, which will match the DNA structure of a person to any blood, hair or other body fluids left at the scene of a crime. Because of the unique structure of each individual's DNA and the increasingly sophisticated and accurate results obtained from such tests, we made a special recommendation that pending the establishment of a register of DNA profiles or "fingerprints", for which the technology is not yet available, records of all those convicted of appropriate offences should be retained for future reference.

To overcome the problem of under-funding, we proposed that the laboratories should institute a system of charging police forces for work done. The evident value of forensic analysis to police inquiries in our view would ensure adequate funding. In any event, we proposed additional safeguards to ensure that the service should not be run down for short-sighted and short-term budgetary reasons.

The Home Office has reacted positively to our report. Under the new director general, it is proposed that the forensic science service will expand to meet the currently unmet demand for forensic science. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to inform the House that the essential short-term increases in staffing have now been agreed by the Treasury. Our proposal that individual forces should take direct financial responsibility for the work done by the forensic science service has also been accepted in principle and a detailed study is to be made into the feasibility of establishing the service as an executive agency. We welcome these steps, but wish to be reassured that the implementation of the practice of charging is not being held up by the failure to obtain the agreement of the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Our third report of this Session was on higher police training and the police staff college. Following our earlier inquiries, we were convinced that a key factor in making the fragmented police structure work was an efficient and coherent system of higher police training. Given the enormous cost of the police service in England and Wales —£3·7 billion in the current year, with 122,000 police officers and 40,000 civilian staff and a variety of other expensive resources—it is vital that senior officers are trained to maximise the use of those resources and manage them effectively to the benefit of the whole police service.

[Mr. John Wheeler]

We were most impressed by the police staff college at Bramshill. Under the leadership of the present commandant, Mr. Bunyard, it has improved its command courses in terms of quality and content so as to equip those in command at all levels to fulfil their responsibilities. Because we recognise the importance of the skills and qualities available at the police staff college, we propose that its resouces should be used more widely in police management consultancy, in the research enterprise and as a venue for seminars and conferences.

From our visits to the college and the evidence we received, it became clear that the location of the college at Bramshill was an essential ingredient of its success. Bramshill house has become a symbol throughout the world of all that is best in the British police tradition. Sadly, Bramshill house is in a poor state of repair and will need urgent expenditure if it is to be preserved, but I believe that the investment that has already been made in the current site makes it inconceivable that the college should move. I would ask my hon. Friend the Minister if he is yet in a position to commit the Home Office to the future of Bramshill house as the venue of the police staff college and to the investment which this will require.

If the excellent training provided at Bramshill is to contribute fully towards a more effectively managed police service, it must be accompanied by appropriate arrangements for recruitment, career development and appointment to senior police posts. Sadly, at present, such arrangements appear to be lacking. We found that the special course, which provides an avenue for accelerated promotion for the most able young officers, has been seriously under-subscribed.

We do not believe that this under-subscription derives from the current method for selection of candidates for the special course and the senior command course by extended interview procedure, which we strongly support. Rather, it appears to follow from difficulties in the recruitment process and in the career development process within forces. It was suggested by Mr. Roger Birch, chief constable of Sussex and director of police extended interviews, that some smaller forces lacked the capacity to select the future leaders of the service.

As a solution to this perceived difficulty, we recommend that the Home Office should investigate the establishment of a professional method of nationally directed and regionally organised recruitment into the police service of England and Wales. To ensure that the most able young officers are motivated to attend the special course, we further recommend that the special course should include a greater element of assessment so that it becomes the principal means for identifying the future leaders and senior officers of the service.

Similar difficulties were also apparent in the case of the senior command course. The Committee was deeply disturbed to learn of the number of officers at ACPO rank who had not attended the senior command course, including 47 per cent. of all assistant chief constables. In addition, a considerable number of those who, after vigorous selection procedures, undertake the senior command course, fail to go on to achieve assistant chief constable rank. This represents an appalling waste of training on the one hand, and a lack of professional training for those in post on the other. The Committee recommends the adoption of a policy whereby, from 1993 onwards, attendance on the senior command course should be a compulsory requirement for all officers applying for posts at the ranks of chief constable and deputy chief constable and Metropolitan and City of London police equivalent rank.

We were also greatly concerned about the wider matter of career development at ACPO rank—in other words, how the leaders of the police service are chosen. The current system of appointment was described by Mr. Birch as an "unprofessional lottery". There is little or no scope for career planning in these grades, and there is a positive disincentive to secondment to undertake essential central service jobs. This must be changed if senior officers are to be given similar opportunities to civil servants to broaden their experience and to deepen their professional knowledge.

The Committee came to the conclusion that the current method of appointment to and within ACPO rank is haphazard and amateurish in the extreme. To overcome the problem for this small career group, which comprises 249 posts, of which 63 are in the Metropolitan police, our report recommends that the ACPO ranks of the police service should be established as a central service grade within the Home Office as a cadre of professional officers holding the historic rank of constable, but available for appointment to the developing tasks of a modern police service both in central services posts and in existing constabularies.

In addition to the nine ACPO rank central service posts, there are currently 600 officers on central service duties within the police service—a number almost equivalent to a smaller police force. The growing importance of such posts is evident from the passage of the Police Officers (Central Services) Act 1989, which received Royal Assent only this week, and which granted to officers on such duties the historic office of constable.

A common thread in our reports on the forensic science service and higher police training is that the Home Office has found it difficult to determine the amount of resources to be devoted to services funded initially by the Home Office, partially paid for by local authorities and used by forces directed by chief constables.

We have therefore proposed in our report on Home Office expenditure that the Home Office should take full financial charge of those services necessarily provided centrally and recommend that, from the financial year 1991-92, the Home Office should pay the full cost of these services and that an appropriate adjustment should be made in the police or rate support grant to leave central and local government contributions to police expenditure in the same proportion as in the current financial year. Such a change would give those responsible for the services a direct incentive to maximise their efficiency and proper use.

In our report on Home Office expenditure, we review three other areas of police activity falling on common police services. For example, we examine the proposal that the secretariat of the Association of Chief Police Officers, should be strengthened. ACPO is increasingly looked to by the Home Office for advice and, in the case of the mutual aid co-ordination centre, it undertakes a quasi-executive role.

We therefore support the enhancement of ACPO's secretariat, provided that it is accompanied by a fundamental examination of the association's statutory

responsibility and accountability. Until the questions concerning the current organisation of the police are resolved, it appears that ACPO is to be the unifying factor in the present fragmented police structure. It is important, therefore, that this is acknowledged and its accountability established.

Our Committee has also been concerned at the limited expenditure on police recruitment, in view of the looming demographic problem which will occur as the pool of young people diminishes in the 1990s. We have therefore proposed that the Home Office and the Police Advisory Board give urgent consideration to an advertising campaign to market the police service as an attractive career to the ablest young people in the future. We re-emphasise the importance of a recommendation in our report on higher police training that there should be national direction of recruitment policy and procedures. These should be directly funded by the Home Office.

The Committee welcomed the appointment by the Home Office of a professional procurement adviser to assist police forces to secure the benefits of bulk purchase of vehicles, while maintaining the freedom of individual forces to procure vehicles best suited to their operational needs and budgetary considerations. We conclude that the Home Office should play an active role in ensuring that all forces achieve the most efficient standards in the purchase and management of vehicle fleets. Our recommendation fits in well with a recent report of the Audit Commission which clearly demonstrated the scope for financial savings. I hope that the Minister will say what progress has been made in this sphere.

I conclude with a few words about the essential provision of central services for the police. My views on the inadequacy of a system with 43 independent police forces in England and Wales are well known. Indeed, there are eight more forces in Scotland and a considerable number of departmental police forces, such as the British Transport police force, the Royal Parks constabulary, the Ministry of Defence police and so on. One means of making this system work is to ensure that services which are vital to successful police work, but which are beyond the scope of individual forces to provide, should be provided centrally.

The current method of provision is through common police services. This arrangement fudges responsibility and obscures accountability between Government, local authorities and chief constables. We have proposed that the Home Office should be free to take decisions on such matters without requiring to justify them in financial terms to local authorities, many of which have varied and possibly conflicting priorities.

No example of a matter in which a speedy decision is required is more important than that relating to the greater co-ordination of the regional crime squads for the whole of England and Wales, which has been suggested in our current inquiry into drug trafficking. If Government are to take decisive action in the provision of a vital national service such as this, they must be able to ensure that it is provided on a scale and at a speed which meets the urgency of the problem. This, above all, is the justification for the change we have proposed in the funding of the common police services.

This is an important debate, in which I hope other members of the Committee and hon. Members will find the opportunity to contribute. I very much look forward to the reply of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to my comments on the work of the Select Committee and the proposals that we make for the improvement of the police system in England and Wales.

4.30 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): I am pleased to speak immediately after the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), under whose chairmanship the Select Committee on Home Affairs has put together a series of valuable reports, which I hope will guide the work of the Home Office.

I shall restrict my comments to the forensic science report, although I am sure that other hon. Members will cover the wide range of other reports. It is especially important to put the spotlight on the forensic science service, because we produced a report which was highly critical of the way in which forensic science has been administered in recent years. Although the Government's response to the forensic science report seems to accept many of our points, I hope that the Minister will be able to flesh out that response to show us that the Government genuinely recognise that there have been some wrong turnings in recent years and that we need to make it clear, not just with words but with deeds, that the forensic science service is now esteemed and is moving forward.

When we examined the service, we found a disturbing scene. Our reports are written in very modest and moderate terms, but in this report we said that the service had fallen on hard times and that morale was at rock bottom. Those are harsh words, but I believe that it was the unanimous view of the Committee that they were justified, and that radical improvement was needed.

Basically, we thought that the fault lay with the failure of the Home Office and its Ministers to understand the function of the forensic science service. It might be that the forensic science service failed to persuade the Treasury that it had problems, but the fault must remain with the Home Office having inadequate persuasive powers. In recent years there has not been any lack of concern in terms of the number of investigations of the forensic science service, but the situation has been one of paralysis by analysis. No sooner had one group come along to examine the forensic science service than another one came along. We were fearful that we would be yet another burden on that service, in that we might also be the cause of some delay.

We found it disturbing that the reviews, such as the Chepstow review, seemed fundamentally to misunderstand what the forensic science service involved. While Lord Rayner might be highly effective within Marks and Spencer, his impact on the forensic science service has been nothing short of disastrous. It is necessary to understand the contribution of the forensic scientist in other than accounting and administration terms. It takes many years to produce a good forensic scientist. Not only is there a prolonged stage of initial training, involving a first and usually a second degree in the person's own specialism, but there is then a long period of work to develop the skills needed to be fully valuable to the forensic science service.

The competent forensic scientist undergoes a unique test when the most adept and agile legal brains of the country subject every aspect of his work to intense investigation. Not many people face such a test.

In recent years there has been a lack of effective leadership in the forensic science service, but more

[Mr. Tony Worthington]

particularly a lack of leadership from the Home Office. We found that morale was low within the service, and that that had been exacerbated by its pay and conditions.

One of the things that most disturbed me was the way in which vacancies are filled. That is done by the Civil Service Commission and I believe that if one wants to lower morale in any service one need only bring in that commission. Someone may apply for a job and hear only many months later that he has got it. What is also disturbing is the lack of involvement of regional directors in appointments. When there are vacancies in a forensic science laboratory a person turns up at the door many moons after the need for an appointment was realised. Such practice is not the way to build up the balance and the quality of service available within a forensic science laboratory.

In the report we urge that the regional laboratories should be involved in choosing those to be appointed as forensic scientists. I hope that that recommendation is accepted. We also urge that vacant posts should be filled more rapidly.

Discontent about appointments is also linked to discontent about pay and conditions within the forensic science service. In the south-east the service has been unable to compete effectively for scarce resources. Forensic scientists have not only seen their salaries fall in comparison to those earned by scientists in the outside world, but they are extremely mortified when they discover that they are paid less than the police constable working on the same case. That must be put right. Following the Rayner review, cuts were imposed which resulted in the worst of all worlds—numbers in the service were reduced at the same time as those remaining in the service realised that others in the law and order business were valued higher than they.

We are faced with a strange situation. We have a law and order Government who have put great stock on the need to bring crime under control. They have recognised that the number of police should be increased, but they have not recognised that the forensic science service, which is a valuable tool for the police, should also have its numbers increased. It has, instead, been subject to cuts. In recent years the forensic science service has not expanded as it should and, therefore, morale has collapsed. Such a collapse is not inevitable. In our valuable visits we also saw the Metropolitan police and the Strathclyde police forensic science laboratories and neither of those places offers the same chronicle of collapsing morale and lack of contact with the management.

It is worth pointing out that the reductions in the forensic science service, run by the Home Office, have occurred alongside two other important events. The first is the massive expansion in the crime rate since the Government came to office. If the service is not expanded, inevitably there will be a diminution in the contribution that the forensic science service can make to the cause. It also emerged that more and more sophisticated techniques, developed by the forensic science service and others, could be applied to crime. Those techniques tend to be expensive in terms of labour and equipment. There was a consciousness of what could be done in relation to forensic science and a realisation that not all that could be done was being done. The most dramatic and sophisticated of those techniques is the development of the DNA service. However, that is merely the most glamorous of the developments that have occurred in forensic science.

What issues face the forensic science service at present? I disagree with the rest of the Committee on the issue of charging. At present, as the hon. Member for Westminster, North said, the forensic science service is funded from the common police services budget. The majority of the Committee suggested that in future, the forensic science service should, at least in part, be supplied to individual forces on a piece rate basis. If forces asked for a particular job to be done, they would be charged for it on a piece rate basis.

I disagree with that suggestion because it seems that the central reason for embracing that method of funding is that those involved will do anything to escape the Home Office clutches. It was interesting that the Metropolitan police and the Strathclyde forensic science laboratories made no request for a charging service. Somewhat surprisingly, the trade unionists were in favour of charging, and when I asked them whether that was because the system would enable them to elude the Home Office's clutches, they as good as admitted that that was a factor.

Mr. Wheeler: It is very good of the hon. Gentleman to give way. He has fairly described the Committee's debate on charging, but I think that he will allow that the Committee was able to observe that the Strathclyde and the Metropolitan police forensic science services were both peculiar and the creatures of the two constabulary services. Therefore, they faced quite different problems from those which exist for the 42 police forces of England and Wales, which have to dip in to the Home Office forensic science service. The smaller forces certainly, and perhaps all the forces, would be unable to establish their own service in the way that the much larger Metropolitan and Strathclyde forces have, of course, been able to do.

Mr. Worthington: I accept that there is a closer relationship between a single force and its laboratory than between regional laboratories and a multiplicity of forces. It is interesting that this simple idea of charging for services on a piece rate basis had not been proposed in the past, but was the product of several years of decline within the forensic science service.

The problem with charging is that it assumes that chief constables make rational decisions. It may seem extraordinary for me to challenge the rationality of chief constables, but at present with a free service—the contribution has been decided according to the common police services budget—they do not make rational decisions. The report referred to one force that referred 6.7 cases per 1,000 crimes and another that referred 1·5 cases per 1,000 crimes. At the moment, there is no price, yet the forces seem to make highly varied decisions. If rationality is to be applied within the charging system, we would have expected that rationality already to exist under the present system, which does not seem to be the case.

We know very little about whether our police forces are efficient or rational, because we have chosen to exclude them from scrutiny for far too long. We make assumptions about their efficiency which we cannot back up because public expenditure on police forces is an under-explored subject. That problem has been partly due to the system of local police forces, in which the operational control is

given solely to the chief constable. Therefore, it has been extremely difficult for local police authorities to judge how expenditure is incurred.

While I agree to some extent with the Chairman of the Select Committee about the excessive number of police forces in England and Wales, I would be dubious about remote police forces which would exacerbate our present lack of knowledge about police operations. Our system of local accountability is undeveloped and under-resourced. We have not developed an adequate means of assessing the efficiency of police forces.

One of the points in the forensic science report about which we were most critical was that, after 50 years of the forensic science service, we are still no closer to knowing whether the level of that service is adequate. Precious little research has been done about whether we use our forensic science services in a cost-effective way. Some work, including the Ramsey report, was done in about 1986, but it did not take us any further. Touche Ross, an outside consultant, was commissioned to produce a report that would enable us to judge whether we were receiving an adequate level of service. However, Touche Ross flunked that task and simply produced a recommendation about charging, believing that the market mechanism would settle the proper standard of forensic science services. The report showed that police forces were far too little aware of the resources which could be given by the forensic science service, and that communication from the service to the police was inadequate.

I have an important question to ask the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, and if he can stop resting his eyes, he may be able to answer it. Has anything specific been done by the Home Office to commission research that would enable us to tell whether the funding of the forensic science service was adequate? We constantly heard from people about how many hundreds of man hours were saved by the timely introduction of the forensic science service.

One often felt that the staff of the forensic science service talked about their most glamorous cases—about their contribution to the Yorkshire Ripper case, for example. But we need to know what forensic science can contribute to the humdrum cases. People whose houses are burgled are frequently very upset about the perfunctory work done by the police service when following through what has been an extremely significant event in their lives. The police would say that they cannot devote much time to investigating those crimes because of their lack of resources. Given the techniques available to forensic science, it is a great pity that adequate research into whether it would be cost-effective for more forensic scientists to work in police investigative teams has not been done. We were also made aware of the extent to which evidence is destroyed or insufficiently dealt with if no forensic scientist is present.

I ask the Under-Secretary to go beyond the Home Office's response, which is once again that the matter is being looked into. Has a decision been made to conduct the—admittedly extremely sophisticated—research to enable us to judge on cost-effective grounds whether we are properly staffing our forensic science service? At the moment it is just guesswork: we deserve something better.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I ask the hon. Gentleman in a spirit of inquiry whether during his and the Committee's considerations they became aware of any great difference in the attitude of the various client police forces to the effectiveness and value of the forensic services. Would such a difference show up under the proposed methods of financing?

Mr. Worthington: I am grateful for that intervention, I referred earlier to how forces vary in their use of forensic science service, and there are many reasons for that. For example, the Kent force told us that it has to use the Aldermaston service. Travelling from Maidstone to Aldermaston constitutes a formidable disincentive to using the service, given that it involves travelling past the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory. I suspect that individual officers' knowledge is often a reason for variations in use, too.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): My hon. Friend has put his finger on something. Deficiencies in the training of our police forces, and hence in their knowledge of forensic services and how to use them, are deeply embedded in their education procedures at every stage, particularly in the training procedures for officers who go on to criminal detection.

Mr. Worthington: That is right. That is why I am asking for more research. Remote regional laboratories may not be the most effective way of building up links with the police forces. Earlier, I mentioned the necessity of involving forensic scientists more routinely at the scenes of crime. That would go against the trend of recent years, when scientists seem to have been more and more laboratory-bound. They have waited for the work to come in rather than going to the scene of the crime.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a better management of resources might be the key, and that that takes us straight into higher police training? Could not the best use be made of forensic science in that way?

Mr Worthington: The general thrust of our report was that we did not believe that there had been coherent management of the service. The first step is to try to find a way to assess the appropriate forensic service for the differing case loads of the police forces. Such research is immensely difficult, but it has not been attempted. Our report seems to suggest allowing it to be done by charging —if a force wants the service, it will pay for it, so we will know whether the service is adequate.

That response is not good enough, given the imperfect nature of the market, which depends on people's knowledge of what forensic science can do. It also depends on geographical factors. If we are ever to use charging, the time to introduce it is after scientific research has established the proper level of a forensic science service in the first place; otherwise, we shall try charging for a few years and then people will ask how we know it is working. We cannot assume that it works. The only way to check is to commission research into whether the service provided is appropriate for the case load of the police.

Mr. Sheerman: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way again. I share his misgivings. The Select Committee report will help to get the forensic service right, but to begin charging now might lead an investigating officer, under pressure from above, to ask how much a forensic

[Mr. Sheerman]

investigation would cost and to reject it in order to cut costs. His chief constable may be looking over his shoulder.

Mr. Worthington: That is right. A chief constable is under pressure from many directions. He is concerned not only with forensic science and the detection of crime; he is under pressure to spend more from what is available—his force may be demanding overtime, he has to deal with traffic matters and with whatever worries his neighbourhood. An invisible and distant regional laboratory will tend to be forgotten. Forensic science offers no certain pay-off. A chief constable may invest in it as a way of finally nailing an offender with a missing piece of proof, but he may not invest in the speculative forensic science work which may be necessary at the early stages of an inquiry but may not seem to offer a certain return at that stage.

I look forward to the Under-Secretary's response to the report. It is a critical report, and the response has assured us that our criticisms have been taken seriously into account, although it has come across in rather a bland way. I hope that the Minister will be able to assure us that the forensic science service will have a much happier time during the next 10 years than it has had during the past 10 years.

5 pm

Dame Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): I suggest to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) that he has missed the main point which the majority of the members of the Committee felt important in relation to charging for the forensic science service. Surely the important consideration is that chief constables and those below them should have as much freedom as possible to dispose of resources as they believe right. In some instances, the careful use of forensic science techniques can save overtime and all manner of other uses of the police so that they can get to the point with the aid of forensic science. With proper management by chief constables and those immediately under them, it will be possible to make that choice. It is not as though the services of the forensic science laboratories are now available ad lib. We are aware that the laboratories are able to take on only a certain amount of work. In these circumstances, the arrangements that we are suggesting would be far more practical.

It has been valuable for the Select Committee on Home Affairs, of which I am a member, to have examined closely various features of the police service in the past few months. I say that for two reasons. We are well aware that our constituents, the public generally and the media are preoccupied with and concerned about ever-increasing levels of crime. Members of the public are especially concerned about crime that can affect them, such as attacks on them by others and the possibility of burglary and robbery.

We are aware also that crime in its more sophisticated sense is reaching out in a way that is terrifying. This is not the occasion to deal with the Committee's current inquiry into drug trafficking, but it is clear that the trafficking goes beyond the remit of regional arrangements. It is international in scale, and on such a scale that it almost beggars belief. In the circumstances, we are surely right to concentrate on our first line of defence—the police—to ensure that it is as well geared as possible to deal with the immense problems facing it now and in future.

The police service is costing an immense amount each year, and that is particularly relevant when we are considering Estimates. It is costing about £3·5 billion a year now, and the cost is likely to rise in the next year or two to well over £4 billion. We have a duty as hon. Members to ensure that that colossal sum each year is spent wisely. That brings me to my concern about higher police training and the staff college. Given the scale of crime and the scale of the resources that we devote to the police service, it is essential that the training of those who are the leaders of the police, in the jargon of the ranks of the Association of Chief Police Officers, is as good as possible. That must apply to what might be called their professional expertise and to the management of their resources, whether that is in terms of manpower or the various expertise that is available to them.

The Committee was fortunate in seeing not only the staff college at Bramshill but the training college in Scotland. Some members of the Committee were also fortunate enough to see the FBI academy at Quantico, Virginia, from which some of us returned only a short while ago. It has been possible for us to make some comparisons with our own training college. I was delighted on overseas visits to learn how well regarded the Bramshill college is and what a role it has to play in the international sphere as well as in providing training for our police force in England and Wales.

There is a particular difficulty, however, which I was staggered to find. The Chairman of the Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), has already spoken of it, but it is one which needs to be stressed. It is possible to reach the ACPO ranks without ever attending the staff college at Bramshill. The figures are alarming. No fewer than three chief constables, 11 deputy chief constables and 67 assistant chief constables have managed to dodge, as it were, senior command courses. Some of those who have taken the trouble to participate in the courses have not received a reward commensurate with their expectations. I gather that 33 officers have attended the courses and have not received preferment.

I warmly endorse the recommendation that by 1993 it should be compulsory for all officers in the higher ranks to have completed a senior command course. I hope that by the end of the century that principle will have been extended by younger members of the police force taking the special course for high flyers first. I suppose that I am now looking ahead to the next century. The present under-subscription is disturbing and it is something that needs to be remedied.

I shall devote a little attention now to the problems that the members of the Bramshill staff encounter. One might have assumed and hoped that any officer who takes time out of his normal career to go to the Bramshill college to make his expertise available would find subsequently that his career prospects are enhanced. The exact opposite appears to be, and is, the case. Officers forfeit opportunities by going to the college. It is hardly surprising that it is difficult to attract individuals of the right calibre. I believe that I am right in saying that the post of assistant commandant was vacant from January to

about April. It appears that no one had even nibbled at the post, let alone there being a group of applicants from which to choose.

In these circumstances, we have as a nation been singularly fortunate in having so outstanding a commandant as Mr. Bunyard, who I think impressed all members of the Committee by the immense initiative that he has taken to bring all the courses up to date and to give them real vitality in the face of the changing problems in crime and policing. Shall we be so lucky again unless urgent steps are taken to ensure that no one suffers in his or her individual career pattern? I do not know why I said "her", as there seems to be a marked absence of women at that level in the police force. I shall not pursue that hobby horse now.

It is clear that some changes must be made. My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North has already touched upon one of the difficulties under the present system, which is the absolute right of police authorities to choose whom they will for entry into the higher ranks. There is no particular slot available for those who have done their stint at Bramshill. I warmly welcome the Committee's suggestion that they should become part of the special cadre at Home Office level, from which the various police authorities must choose to fill their appointments. That is vital if the staff college is to occupy the central place, as it should, in the education of the higher police service.

It was interesting to note that the overseas course run by the staff college is highly popular with people from many Commonwealth and other countries. During our recent trip to the United States, we met one or two people who had attended the staff college and they spoke highly of it. The course should be extended because, apart from spreading good practice to other countries, it is of immense value in forging intimate links, which are not otherwise available, with countries that send their police officers to Bramshill. It is paralleled with the higher education that we give to young students from Commonwealth and, in particular, Third-world countries. It is one of the most valuable ways in which we can help the Third world. I very much hope that my hon. Friend, when he replies, will encourage our hope that the overseas course might be allowed to expand.

It is clear that more money is needed to keep open the staff college. For example, the library is housed in bits and pieces all over the place. it is an excellent library and an important resource, but it is difficult for students to use it effectively. I urge my hon. Friend to ensure the provision of new accommodation. Indeed, there should be new accommodation for the students. We must remember that many of them are highly placed police officers who do not want to occupy third-rate 1950s and 1960s-type accommodation, which was never very good in its heyday and is now well past it. We were allowed to see a sample of the accommodation, and it was not worthy of the position that the staff college holds.

While there is some doubt about the staff college remaining on the Bramshill site, I can understand the case for being cautious about improvements, because they would be extremely expensive. I hope that my hon. Friend will take on board the Committee's recommendation that a decision should be made soon on whether the site should continue to be used, as we hope it will. The house provides a fascinating centrepiece that attracts all who go into it. We must never under-estimate the effect of symbols. It is rather like the military bands attached to the armed forces; they have an importance and a value far beyond just providing music or an attractive aesthetic environment.

We are aware that the Home Office is considering whether any of the money confiscated under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 should be used for the police service. We are also aware that that is not likely to be attractive to the Treasury, which always holds the firm policy of taking in any money, spare or otherwise, to dispose of as it wishes.

Mr. Wheeler: Searching the streets for pennies.

Dame Janet Fookes: My hon. Friend makes an interesting intervention.

It is not likely to be popular if we suggest that money should be diverted from the greedy clutches of the Treasury. It does not matter which Government are in office because the Treasury attitude remains the same. There is a case for allowing the police service to retain some, if not all, of the money confiscated under the Act. In what better way could we spend some of that money than on the upkeep and an increase in the work of the staff college? Indeed, the report recommends that, and I hope that it will be taken seriously. It has the merit of not picking out one police force as against another; it is common to all. It is especially appropriate that the money should be used in that way.

I wish to discuss one or two of the wider issues arising from our inquiries. They have been touched on in the remarks about the forensic science service, and they apply equally to the training of the police. There are grave weaknesses in the way in which our police service is organised and split between the 43 police forces of England and Wales, coupled with the separate police service in Scotland. At a time when there is an increasing need to pool resources and to act not only nationally but internationally, there must be some doubt about whether the current tripartite system should be allowed to continue. That point does not arise out of the report's recommendations; I make it simply as a personal view.

The more we study the police service, the more we find weaknesses arising from that pattern of arrangements. I shall not be so bold as to say how I think it should be organised, and in any case, it is probably beyond the scope of the debate. I simply state that urgent questions should be asked, not only by our Committee but by Home Office Ministers. The problems of crime are likely to increase, as will the costs of dealing with them. In the 1990s there will be difficulties in recruiting sufficient police because of the downturn in the birth rate.

In all those circumstances, I believe that the Home Office should take a hard look at the problems, and not take too long about doing so, because we must ensure that the police service is geared for the turn of the century and beyond.

5.18 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): My association with the police service over many years is well known. I had the privilege of serving as a policeman in London for five years during the 1960s. More recently, I served as vice-chairman of the North Yorkshire police authority. I am now greatly enjoying a third bite at the cherry of police activity by

[Mr. John Greenway]

working with the Home Affairs Select Committee under the very able chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler).

Some important facts have already come out of tonight's debate. There is a great deal of agreement among hon. Members on both sides of the House about the problems that face our police service in society's fight against crime. We are not looking to answer those problems with ideological solutions. Nevertheless, there are one or two different remedies, which the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) has mentioned.

It is important to say at the outset that there has been an unprecedented increase in crime, not just under this Government, but over the past two or three decades. There is grave public anxiety about how we should tackle the crime rate and how we should best respond to society's anxieties. The main purpose of the Select Committee's inquiries into police matters is to make the policing of Britain more effective so that the public will feel more reassured and, in particular, have their confidence in the police restored. It is a great tragedy that, for a variety of reasons, that confidence has been eroded in recent years.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) is not in his place, but I understand that he hopes to take part in the debate. However, it is important whenever possible to pay tribute to the dedication of our police service. The comments that have been made tonight and in the Select Committee's report are a reflection not on the dedication of our policemen but on the archaic structures that are increasingly coming under strain and stress.

There has been a notable recurrence of several common themes in our recent inquiries into police activity. They include the problems of funding and whether we are funding our police services adequately, despite the record resources that the Government have made available to the police service and to increasing manpower. There is the need for more central direction and co-ordination of police services, to which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary referred recently in a major speech about policing Britain.

There is the potential benefit to the community of consistency in policing policy and performance. Working with the North Yorkshire police authority, I found that crime is no longer the province of local villains. It is a mobile problem. In north Yorkshire, many burglaries are committed by gangs who can be 50 or 60 miles away within half an hour using fast motor cars. That emphasises the need for more consistency and greater co-operation and co-ordination.

There is the problem of the under-utilisation of specialist support services, particularly in training and in the forensic science service, which was dealt with in two of our reports. Finally, there are the strains and stresses of the existing structure, to which I have already referred.

In our reports, we have offered markedly different solutions to the problems of various aspects of the police service as we felt was appropriate. For example, on funding and direction—matters that have already been outlined—we looked for greater direct responsibility in police forces in the use of the forensic science service and perhaps even greater responsibility in carousel training courses on particularly topical isues at the police college at Bramshill. They could be accommodated at force level, but we look for more central funding and co-ordination, higher police training, police recruitment, the installation of telecommunications equipment and—without pre-empting the report that we shall lay before the House later this year on drug trafficking—national co-ordination and effort in the war against the scourge of drug abuse.

The procedures for funding common police services are protracted and cumbersome given the amount of money involved in relation to the overall costs of policing and local government expenditure. The Home Office acknowledged that during our inquiry, suggesting in its memorandum that local authorities may be faced with a bill for services on which they have not been fully consulted, although both parties have sought to make the system work as well as it can. But the Home Office memorandum discussed only the cost arrangements and did not deal in detail with the discussions between the Home Office, police authorities and local government agencies—the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities.

I do not want to dwell on that matter at length, but I refer my hon. Friend to an interesting exchange of views which took place during the evidence given by the head of the finance and technology group at the Home Office, when the conflict that that creates was clearly admitted. In his final comments, the head of the finance and technology group said:

"I would not want to have a Common Police Services Committee made up of the members of every one of the subsidiary services. That would be unmanageable. What the local authorities therefore have is a group of representatives who are, after all, empowered by the local authority associations to take decisions which commit members to spend money. This really is where the buck ends, because at that stage they are talking about a figure, they have to agree a figure, or the Home Secretary in the end has to decide on a figure on the basis of their evidence, which ratepayers will have to meet. So there is bound to be a conflict of interest between those who want more training or more forensic science and those who have got to meet the bill."

It was the strains and stresses of that conflict which caused the Select Committee to suggest in its recent report that the common police services budget should be a centrally funded item in the way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North has already outlined. That conflict creates difficulties for chief constables, police committees, police authorities and local authorities. It also raises questions of accountability.

Chief constables have difficulty in exercising judgments about how a chief constable should best police his force. There are difficulties for local authorities in balancing the need to maintain and develop an effective police service without which other more substantial expenditure on manpower, to which they have gladly committed themselves, may not be put to best use. At the same time, there is a need to control expenditure for ratepayers.

Those local authority representatives who assist in controlling the common police services expenditure are seldom in a position to decide on policing priorities. In addition, chief constables are already facing detailed local negotiations with their council treasurers or leaders or chairmen of policy resources committees over the cost to the local authorities of the chief constable's own plans at force level, which may also involve detailed representations to the Home Office for approval. Matters of equipment, police house repairs or the standard of police

stations and accommodation are discussed for many hours by local police chiefs and their police committees, but a discussion of what is in the common police services budget seldom, if ever, takes place. That is one reason why we considered direct charging for forensic science as a way forward.

Our report recommends that the ACPO secretariat should be strengthened in order to improve the central co-ordinating force within the police service. That seemed to be the only sensible way forward within the present structure.

However, chief constables have only a limited accountability to their police authorities. They are not accountable for operational matters. No one should seek to change that essential absence of political interference in police operations. Nevertheless, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary looks to ACPO to provide more central co-ordination and to assume additional functions on a national basis. It is not clear what line of accountability such arrangements would create for my right hon. Friend and for the House, particularly given that the only line of accountability for chief constables is to the 43 police authorities—and even that is limited.

That all suggests a need for change. The Committee's report recommends that the ACPO ranks become a centrally directed force. That would be one way of achieving better accountability and co-ordination, but I wonder whether we should consider a further opportunity. When members of the Committee visited the police college in Holland and spoke to officials of the Dutch criminal justice department, it became clear that that country has a completely different arrangement for chief police officer representation. Holland has a separate body to deal with the requirements of chief police officers' professional associations, and another for central co-ordination of police services.

The structural stresses and strains in our police service require serious consideration of that arrangement, and I should like to see formed a new, central support committee, drawing on only a small number of police constables but involving also inspectors of constabulary, a handful of representative police authority chairmen, and Home Office officials—all under the formal chairmanship of the Home Secretary, and thereby accountable to this House.

In that way, the role of ACPO as a professional association could be kept separate, and would avoid the difficulty of securing agreement from 43 chief constables, let alone that of all the deputy chief constables and assistant chief constables—who together constitute the 249 members of ACPO. Getting them all to agree on policy is far from easy. We must break through that barrier and instead get heads together to arrive at solutions to improving the effectiveness of our police service and making better use of the substantial resources we commit to it.

The objectives are only too clear. We must continue to improve the professional standard of policing, for only in that way can confidence be restored. We must ensure that police have access to the finest training, and that those who provide it are of the highest calibre and have up-to-date practical experience. They should include, as my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) pointed out, officers who will subsequently achieve higher rank in the service, so that the time they spend at Bramshill as training officers will be part of their career development, rather than an avenue at the end of a distinguished police career.

We must ensure that resources are used to best effect. It is not just a matter of ensuring value for money from forensic science or police overtime but of reordering priorities. It is about ensuring not only that the value and benefit of forensic science, for example, is better appreciated but that that service is given every opportunity and encouragement to achieve its potential.

Structures are under pressure not only because of financial constraints, though it would be wrong to under-estimate the difficulties that such constraints create. Structures are under pressure because centrally provided facilities have been unable to develop their full potential and to provide the quality of service needed to convince chief constables, seniour police officers and police authorities of the benefits that such professional help can bring to the fight against crime. There is no doubting that chief constables are fully aware of the value of forensic science, but given the inadequate facilities to be found at some laboratories, it is difficult to see how chief constables would be encouraged to refer cases to a forensic science laboratory, when they want a much quicker solution to a particular criminal investigation.

There is much anecdotal evidence of the savings in police resources through more skilful use of forensic science, and the Committee recommended that there be more investigation of that aspect. Even so, an expanded forensic service along the lines suggested by the Committee would make a major contribution, if implemented over the three years that the report suggests. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department can give the Committee and the House information about the progress of discussions and negotiations with the Treasury.

The question has already been asked whether direct funding of forensic science would provide a suitable solution. In my view, it would. Direct funding would highlight for police authorities the value of forensic science. Most police authority members are unaware of the behind-the-scenes arguments, but would become aware of activities within the forensic science service if it was an item in the budget, to be considered in the same way as other heads of expenditure.

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie asked how one would know that direct charging was working. The answer is that we must give it a try. How do we know that committing hundreds of thousands of pounds—or, in larger forces, millions of pounds—to police overtime works?

As to the structure of 43 police forces, I know that there are differences among the members of the Committee, and I take the point made by the chief constable of north Wales, and chairman of the association's crime committee, who clearly drew the Committee's attention to the undesirability of wholesale changes of structure because it would divert and erode police effort. Nevertheless, if we believe in a local management system that does not interfere in operational matters but which would give a chief constable and his force the financial and managerial support that they require, I see no reason why we should not trust the police authorities to deal sensibly and properly with forensic science services on a direct charging basis. It would be an insult to the forces' integrity and professionalism to suggest that they would do otherwise.

[Mr. John Greenway]

The Committee suggested that the Home Office and the inspectors of constabulary should issue guidance on the use of forensic science, and recommended—as did Touche Ross—that more scientific support managers should be appointed to help police forces make greater use of it. Central co-ordination and funding of DNA profiling will be essential if this major opportunity to improve detection of offenders and to eliminate suspects—DNA profiling will be particularly relevant—is to be realised.

My hon. Friend the Member for Drake spoke at some length about Bramshill college, so I shall refer to it only briefly. I strongly support the comments that have been made about the method of selection and appointment of senior police officers. It is haphazard and amateurish. The chief constable of Sussex police, Mr. Roger Birch, described it as an unprofessional lottery.

Chief superintendents do not have a sufficient incentive to take the next step up in the ACPO ranks. Many factors dissuade and discourage them from taking that step, quite apart from the major domestic upheaval that is caused because people have settled into particular areas. There are changed pension arrangements and little additional remuneration for a chief superintendent who becomes an assistant chief constable. It is astonishing that 47 per cent. of assisted chief constables have not attended a senior command course, but that must be balanced with the more damning evidence that many police officers who have been on senior command courses have not taken the step beyond chief superintendent rank into the ranks for which they were selected and trained.

As the Home Affairs Committee recommended, funding of the common police services should become a centrally directed arrangement. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Drake and the recommendation in our report that it would be no bad thing if drug profit confiscations were committed to a trust, with the police college as a major beneficiary. My hon. Friend referred to a good band and to images. The reputation throughout the world of Bramshill college is based upon its skill in training senior police officers. It is not a reflection of the quality of accommodation available for them.

Higher professionalism is the key to retaining and restoring confidence in the police. Such professionalism demands up-to-date practice and high-quality training. Great strides have been made, but much more could be done if priorities were reassessed and reordered. I am sure that the Committee will look forward to hearing the Minister's response.

5.43 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): In discussing common police services, I want to refer to the problems associated with disaster planning. I am interested in that issue because of my constituency concerns.

The police are involved in two aspects of disaster planning. First, problems can arise in designated works, such as Staveley Chemicals in my constituency. If a disaster occurred, the population nearby would be seriously affected. Obviously, the emergency services must have plans to handle a disaster, and the police are at the forefront in triggering action. It is essential that the latest technology is available and that police methods are correct, and that involves the police training college and other back-ups.

Secondly, there are general disasters for which there is no specific contingency plan but only a general plan. That general plan must be adapted to handle railway emergencies, air disasters—such as the east midlands disaster, in which Derbyshire county police provided assistance—toxic and hazardous waste problems and the nuclear transhipments that travel up the M1 and clip the end of my constituency at Heath. Any such disaster could hit anywhere and must be handled carefully.

The police engage in periodic exercises to handle potential disasters such as air crashes. The backing that they are given is essential. They often suffer from inadequate training and have difficulty in releasing manpower to provide common services and appropriate training. The Home Office has wide powers. Paragraph 12 of the fourth report of the Home Affairs Committee states that, under

"the Police Act 1964, the Secretary of State 'may provide and maintain or may contribute towards the provision or maintenance of a police college, district police training centres, forensic science laboratories, wireless depots and such other organisations and services as he considers necessary or expedient for promoting the efficiency of the police'."

The Home Office bears 51 per cent. of the costs. This presents great difficulties when local authorities are involved with the police authorities. There have been a number of years of Government cuts in financial assistance and now local government funding is to be transformed with the introduction of the poll tax.

More funding should come centrally to develop effective disaster planning. The difficulty is in deciding who controls what happens—central police forces or local police forces. It is essential for the police to have adequate resources. They are expected to show the right susceptibilities in handling problems. Considerable training and provision are required in respect of not only disasters but general policing matters. Police officers may not be aware of what to do in an accident involving hazardous or toxic waste. The most that even a senior policeman is given is a short course, when he merely examines a video for an afternoon, and he is then expected to act. The answer is to provide considerable resources to enable the police to release the appropriate training manpower.

The fourth report also deals with the role of the secretariat of the Association of Chief Police Officers. I have just come down from the Committee on the Football Spectators Bill. My connection with ACPO is its statistics on arrests in or around football grounds. The Minister for Sport gave those statistics to the House and they became known, incorrectly, as the "League of Shame". My investigations into the figures show that there were errors in the statistics and that ACPO was unable to supply details to explain which arrests were inside the grounds and which were outside, the reasons for the arrests and the categories of offence involved. Were the arrests for the carrying of a klaxon horn, for example, which occurred at one club, or for theft? How many arrests were of street traders outside football grounds?

The secretariat clearly needs some organisation so that it can present adequate information in matters in which the police are involved, especially in matters that relate back to the Hillsborough disaster. It seems that police forces throughout the country collect information which

varies according to local experience. That information is then stuck together by the central organisation which clearly lacks the expertise and time to put information together effectively and in a way that would allow the House to judge properly an issue which is of concern and which could have a considerable impact on the work of the police.

That issue also has an effect on the way in which disasters are dealt with. I understand from a parliamentary question that the Home Office is concerned about disaster legislation. America, France, Australia and several other countries have contingency planning and centralised co-ordination to handle disasters. That is not dealt with adequately in this country. We should ensure that there are proper centralised services to assist the police, because they are at the forefront of co-ordinating and organising the different authorities, such as the fire service, that have to be brought together to pick up the pieces when a disaster occurs. Some of that could be achieved by careful planning. There must be greater understanding and education so that people can adapt and make adjustments according to the circumstances.

When the east midlands air disaster occurred, for example, the mountain rescue organisation was of great value. That organisation automatically dug steps into the embankment, which meant that rescue arrangements could be handled easily. Such information could be spread by a central organisation, but that does not happen automatically at present. We must ensure that the correct groups of personnel are involved in dealing with disasters and are able to respond effectively.

Mr. Ashby: As the hon. Gentleman knows, Kegworth, where the air disaster occurred, is in my constituency. One fact that emerged crystal clear from the disaster was that all the many years of training for just such a disaster fell into place perfectly. The co-ordination required was there because the planning was there. The rescue services had thought long and hard about every eventuality. One cannot pay anything but the highest tribute to the rescue services in Leicestershire on that day.

Mr. Barnes: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. My own local knowledge of the services operating in Derbyshire which assisted at that disaster tells me that the hon. Gentleman is correct. However, it is important that, as well as having trained and dedicated people to help, we should ensure that they have the right materials and understanding to handle disasters. A common-sense approach needs to be developed. When dealing with hazardous and toxic waste, for example, what is needed is not only the ability to turn to the relevant information, but for the police to have a good pair of binoculars so that they can pick out the information at a distance, rather than placing themselves in great difficulties. The spread of training, the sharing of training exercises and the building up of national policies for handling disasters will lead to applied common sense and dedication being able to work effectively.

5.57 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I must first delcare an interest as the parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation. I must also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on the great clarity with which he presented the recommendations of his Committee. It was especially interesting to listen to my hon. Friend explaining exactly what was proposed and how the Committee had arrived at its conclusions.

I want to deal with the future of the forensic science service. Paragraph 93 of the report recommends that the Home Office should plan to transfer direct financial responsibility for the regional forensic laboratories from central support services to individual police forces. That proposal is of major importance and of legitimate interest to the Police Federation. The Touche Ross report made the point that one does not appreciate a service unless one pays for it, but I am told that, due to a shortage of staff, the forensic service has not always been able to respond as fully as it would like to police requirements. Staffing is obviously of vital importance.

The Police Federation believes that many of the report's conclusions and recommendations are based fairly on the evidence given to the Committee, but there are several matters of concern about the proposed change in funding arrangements, which I will highlight. The Police Federation believes that such a change could have a serious effect on the investigation of serious offences, especially by smaller forces. Following the Brighton bomb murders, for example, 1,200 dustbins of rubble and material were sent for forensic examination. One cannot help wondering whether a force would be prepared to meet such costs, especially if the victim were a vagrant or someone of lesser public importance than those who were unhappily involved in that tragedy.

There is also the question whether a smaller force would be able to finance a large-scale DNA screening exercise, espcially if the people to be screened were from the area of an adjoining large force. Those costs would be the smaller force's responsibility, simply because the murder victim was found within its force area. I shall give the House a hypothetical example. Let us take the case of a serious murder which must be investigated by the local force. If a Londoner were found murdered in, say, Bedfordshire—which has a comparatively small force—Bedfordshire would have to assume responsibility for the forensic costs involved in that investigation. That point is causing the federation some concern and, like me, it will be interested to hear what my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department has to say about that aspect when he replies to the debate.

Another aspect of the forensic service which is of great importance is the quality of the service. It is widely agreed both in the House and outside that it is vital to maintain that quality, because so much depends on it in the detection of crime.

The Select Committee on Home Affairs recognises that the service should seek to appoint and train about 40 new staff per year for each of the next three years. Allowing for natural wastage, the Committee states that that would leave the service 10 per cent. larger than is currently planned. In its reply to the Committee's recommendations, the Home Office has stated that it is actively considering the case for further increases in staff for the forensic service. It then points out that in the light of the Select Committee's recommendations and other information, it is already committed to bringing the service up to complement. At present it is 23 members of staff below complement. The additional staff proposed by the Select Committee exclude those staff.

Therefore, on the assumption that wastage will continue at about 20 per cent. per year, the Home Office

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pointed out that the Committee's proposals amount to a net increase of 60 posts by the end of March 1992, roughly 10 per cent. over and above the 51 posts already planned.

The Government's reply then contains a sentence which I view with concern:

"The implications of this, and the costs and benefits of the additional staff, will be covered in the assessment the Home Office is making."

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North and his colleagues will wish to see that matter pursued and to be certain that the additional staff that they recommend are provided. Having said that, one recognises the Home Office's difficulties in funding such an operation.

Mr. Wheeler: It is good of my hon. Friend to allow this brief intervention and I assure him that the important point that he has raised will be pursued. It may be helpful for my hon. Friend and the House to know more generally that it is the practice of the Select Committee on Home Affairs to review its reports regularly, to look back to the recommendations that it has made and to assess the progress that has been made with them. Therefore, there is the opportunity to measure those points once again—that is, apart from the value of the comments made by my hon. Friend in this debate.

Mr. Shersby: It is reassuring to know that my hon. Friend's Committee follows up its recommendations. Indeed, one would expect nothing less from a Committee of such excellence.

I turn now to the issue whether the work of the service should be entrusted in the future to a body with executive agency status. That is an important aspect of the report. One must consider how the executive agencies which have already been set up are working. So far the experiment —or rather, the change—has been a good one, and positive results are already flowing from the change of status. I hope that the Home Office will follow that up and that the change to executive agency status will be carried out in the not-too-distant future.

I welcome especially the comments in the report on relations with the police. I should like to put on record how much the federation welcomes those paragraphs in the Committee's report and in the Government's response to it.

DNA profiles are a move of the utmost importance in the detection of crime. The costs involved in carrying out that type of research are probably not yet fully appreciated. They may well increase considerably in the years ahead, and clearly that factor will have to be taken into account in a change in funding levels.

In conclusion, paragraph 20 of the Government's response, which deals with forensic pathology, states:

"The final meeting of the Working Party on Forensic Pathology took place in April 1989 and their report is now being submitted to the Home Secretary."

I understand that that working party has been in existence for four years. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary would say something about when the working party's report will be published, because it is a matter of considerable interest to all those who are interested in forensic pathology, and not least to the members of the Police Federation.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have made these brief comments on these serious, interesting and excellent reports, and I look forward to hearing my hon. Friend's reply.

6.6 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I shall refer briefly to the forensic science service. The work of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), was a great public service to the people of this country.

The test of how well the Government have responded to the Select Committee's report will depend to a great degree on whether they take on board the point that the chief constable of Kent made in his evidence to the Select Committee, when questioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington).

It is vital that the House remembers the critical comments of paragraph 108, which state:

"Following the Rayner Review, 'Selectivity' was the expression which came along and cases were extremely carefully sorted out before they were sent off to the laboratory. They were not sorted out necessarily so that you were going to get the best result from the laboratory, full stop, but because the investigating officers knew that the manpower resources available at the laboratory were not such as to do more than a fraction of what investigating officers wanted them to do. As a result, a lot of stuff that you would have expected to have been forensically examined was not and still is not. It is not right, but that is the truth of the matter. The spinoff from that, of course, is that there is less confidence by officers who do not necessarily understand the problem but understand the result in the Forensic Science Service, and that will go on to people not being as careful or as enthusiastic at the scene of the crime as they should be, because they do not anticipate that they are going to send anything to the laboratory in any event."

That will be one of the crucial tests that the Home Office and the Government will have to pass. They will have to justify themselves and tell the people of this country that justice does not come cheap and that it is vital that resources are made available. The pay must be good enough to attract people into the laboratories. It is nonsense that police officers cannot send exhibits that they find at the scene of the crime to the laboratory. That is a terrible indictment of the present situation, and people are no longer prepared to accept it. I hope that the Government will come up with the goods.

The chief constable of Kent did an excellent service by sending the Committee a letter—it is printed on pages 61 to 63 of the report—continuing examples of the excellent work that the forensic science service does. I shall not list all those examples now but let me give the House one of them. It concerns a murder in Shifnal in 1984. The forensic science laboratory was able to identify a single imprint of a shoe outside a particular property as the imprint of one of only 90 pairs of shoes imported into the United Kingdom from an Italian manufacturer. All the people who had purchased the shoes were traced, and a conviction was made. It is critical, not only in serious cases such as that but in far less serious cases, that the facilities are available to police officers to enable them to send all the scientific exhibits that they wish to send to be properly examined and to receive the necessary treatment.

Mr. Sheerman: Is not one aspect of the Select Committee's deliberations rather worrying? I refer to the evidence from senior people in the police force and,

indeed, chief police officers, who said that charging for the service might mean that the investigating officer would consider the cost to his force first and only then whether the evidence might be useful in apprehending a criminal somewhere down the line.

Mr. Wardell: I share my hon. Friend's concern. If cash limits in the police force are such that an officer cannot submit exhibits to the forensic service because of cost considerations, that will have serious implications for justice.

My second point concerns the availability of forensic pathologists. I shall rely heavily in my remarks on the comments of the president of the Forensic Science Society, who is professor of forensic pathology at the university of Wales college of medicine in Cardiff. In evidence to the Select Committee, which appears on page 159, in paragraph 421, Professor Bernard Knight says:

"The basic problem is that the core of forensic pathology, which is university based, has declined so much that it is now ineffective in really training sufficient future pathologists and also training those from the hospital service who are newly appointed and who actually numerically now markedly outnumbers us in the Home Office appointed list. This central core is shrinking rapidly and one wonders what is going to happen when it reaches vanishing point, which is not very far away. That is the basic problem: the contraction of what you might call the full-time professionals who not only provide a service themselves but are responsible for teaching, research and the training of more peripheral part-time pathologists who are currently in the majority. I have to say that I think the standards are beginning to decline because of this general wind-down."

We must address that problem. If we do not have high-quality, highly trained forensic pathologists, the quality of the service available to the police will be much reduced.

Finally let me deal with the whole question of what Professor Knight calls "waiting for Wasserman". In paragraph 427, Professor Knight says:

"It has got to the point where I would not say it is funny but 'Waiting for Wasserman' is like 'Waiting for Godot', it has become a phrase in our sub-culture."

Mr. Wasserman is the chairman of a Home Office committee which, according to Professor Knight, had already been considering the matter for four and a half years when he gave his evidence on 4 December 1988. It is a little worrying when Governments use terms such as "shortly", "in the near future", "soon" and "this year." They use the worst possible excuses for the inadequacy of their response. An eminent professor of forensic pathology has pointed a finger at the chairman of the committee on which he serves. Surely, when that happens, it is high time that the Government looked into the matter.

The Government's response to the comment about the Committee chaired by Mr. Wasserman was wonderful. The recommendation was clear:

"We recommend that the Working Party on Forensic Pathology should set a deadline for the production of its report to resolve without delay the short-term difficulties of the forensic pathology service".

That was a kind response to four and a half years of delay.

The rest of the Committee's response makes wonderful reading:

"The final meeting of the Working Party on Forensic Pathology took place in April 1989 and their report is now being submitted to the Home Secretary."

"Is being" is a wonderful phrase. The Home Office does not say "It has been submitted" or "It will be submitted", but "It is being submitted." That implies an endless chain of events and it is impossible to know what stage the process has reached. It is high time that we knew. I know that the Minister knows, and I am sure that he will tell us, when the report will be published. It is to be hoped that it will be before the end of this year—before the five and a half years have elapsed.

We are talking about an extremely important aspect of the ability of the police to ensure that the public have confidence in their ability to identify causes and find those responsible for crime. Without proper staffing, training and funding, the service will never be able to do the job that we so desperately need doing.

6.19 pm

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): It was a delight to be on the Select Committee that examined forensic science services. Its report was virtually unanimous, apart from one point about charging for services. Tht showed the great philosophical divide between Conservative and Opposition Members. Conservative Members believe that cost controls and cost management are essential tools of management. Everyone in management understands that point. If there are two companies in similar areas, both producing similar goods, but one producing them at a greater cost, in management terms it is right to be able to inquire into the reasons for it. Charging for forensic science services would help to do that.

Charging for the service, and applying cost controls and cost management, do not mean cutting the service. That applies to the National Health Service and various other services. Opposition Members believe in providing services without management finding out what services cost and how they can be more efficient. That is the great divide between us. The Committee's recommendations should be followed.

One cannot help thinking that the police force, which was founded in the 19th century, is still in the 19th century in management terms. It should be looking towards the 21st century. Our investigations revealed that we should have a unified police force or, perhaps, a force divided on the basis of no more than four regions. The chief constable of Leicestershire, my own chief constable, has said that he thinks there should be no more than 10 regions.

Why are we playing the numbers game? Mr. Birch, the chief constable of Sussex, suggested larger regions. Why 10? Why four? We are looking for a unified force. With the 43 local police authorities, we have seen a dissipation of resources, problems with promotion, resources, management teams, and a lack of co-ordination. When we point that out, we hear the reply, "We have a committee." It is wonderful to have committees, but they are not a substitute for a properly co-ordinated national police force.

Our report on higher police training at the police staff college at Bramshill highlighted a lack of clear direction about what we should do in the 21st century, in terms not only of a unified police force but of management. There seems to be no real direction for providing proper management in the police force. Management requires a high degree of expertise. Every organisation, both major and minor, trains its managers from an early age. The police force trains people in the best use of available resources, and how to make proper management decisions about priorities not only in their own service but in other aspects such as investigation. People are trained in the use

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of the forensic science service and in the necessary financial priorities. Why should the police force lack proper financial management in the forensic science service and other services? It is a proper tool of management.

When the Committee investigated the management structure of the police, it was surprised to find how deficient it was. We went to the Netherlands and saw that the future leaders of the police service were trained at an early age and in a positive manner. They are being taken on at about 21 years old, and even younger, and they are doing a four or five-year training course. I met a police officer who had been in the force for about 10 years. He was aged 29. I asked him what he felt about going to the special training course and training in management skills. He said, "I am too old. I am set in my ways. Yes, I will benefit and I will be able to achieve certain things, but I know that I am too old. I should have done this at a younger age."

One cannot help but think that we are doing too little too late in training police officers. We have police on a special course at Bramshill. That course is designed to identify those who have the potential to achieve the rank of chief inspector and to accelerate their promotions. It is a sandwich course over two or three periods with seven months' training at the college. That college training is also divided into two periods. The course focuses on the foundations of management skills, but it does not carry them through. An interesting point about the course is to be found at paragraph 75 to 78 of the report. Mr. Birch, who was also the director of the police extended interviews, identifies those who should go on the course. He said that there was misunderstanding and suspicion about the course and a failure adequately to promote it within the police service. It is vastly under-subscribed. Last year, of 3,196 provincial officers qualified to apply for the special course, only 463 chose to do so.

The problem is that there is a little of the "us and them" approach to the course. There is perhaps a sneering approach—"He has been on a special course," or, "He is very uppity. He is going on that special course." There is a failure to recognise that special courses provide rapid acceleration for someone who is capable of management skills and of making full use of his potential thereafter. Much of the problem is caused simply because we have 43 police authorities. Possibly, some authorities have individual approaches to the people who have been on such courses. Some do not appreciate the nature of those courses and the valuable contribution that people who have been on them are able to make.

Mr. Birch considered that recruiting officers sometimes failed to identify those officers with the potential to move to the senior ranks in the service. He said that there were variations in policies between forces and that that led to bewilderment amongst potential recruits and to a perception of the police service as unprofessional. That highlights the problems that result from having a number of different police forces, a problem which perhaps a uniform police service could take on board.

Mr. Birch also suggested that there was a need to examine ways of ensuring the selection of a sufficient proportion of recruits of higher than average calibre to provide a pool of talent for rapid promotion. He went on to suggest that the solution to the problem was the creation of regional police assessment centres from which chief constables would meet their recruiting needs. I do not know why he wants regional police assessment centres when he could have a central one which would do the job properly and better than centres in individual regions or areas.

Other hon. Members have pointed out that in Britain we have chief constables who are supposed to be in charge of large forces and that they require great management skills. Yet many chief constables have not attended senior command courses, some have not been on other courses and I dread to think that some might not even have been on a special course. Indeed, that is probably the case because of the special course timetable and the time at which it started.

A worrying aspect of our policing is that we have such an enormous organisation, taking the police as a whole, and that none of those top men have been on a course on which any large body would insist. Nobody in Shell or ICI would be at the top of such an organisation without having been on a type of Harvard school of management course.

But the police, who are in management—they are managing huge resources and large numbers of people in an organisation of great importance to the nation—do not go on any substantial management course designed to give their forces the managerial skill that is required. In that sense we are still in the 19th century.

We were impressed when we went to the Netherlands and saw them coping with this problem. We saw them training their managers at an early age for the great duties in their police forces that they would have to undertake. We saw that they realised the importance of that training. We must have a radical rethink of our police force if we are to bring it into the 21st century and make it the great force that we want and need.

6.33 pm

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): At the start of a debate such as this, as one listens to the excellent contributions that are made, one is not sure what major themes will emerge at later stages and, indeed, whether there will be a thematic balance to the deliberations. Taken with the debate on policing in London that we had last week, it is clear that some common themes have been emerging.

It has been refreshing to hear the comments on those themes because if one can describe this Chamber as a state of the art debating chamber—perhaps we will become that in November—we have today witnessed the state of the art pointed towards certain themes. We on the Opposition Benches warmly welcome many of the proposals that the Select Committee have made. The Committee did an excellent job in pinpointing some of the problems that prevent us achieving the police force that the nation needs and deserves.

Having said that, it will come as no surprise to Conservative Members to learn that I shall make some comments of a somewhat more partisan nature. I promise that they will not be too partisan. Many comments have been made on topics that are familiar to us—about efficiency, effectiveness and management—and the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) made some good points about the training of managers in the police force and the need for good management.

Comments have been made about the need for greater centralisation. That theme is touted a great deal when we talk of police matters. Although it is important to speak of efficiency and effectiveness—rather in the way people speak of motherhood and apple pie—when talking of efficiency and good management, I am not sure about the need for centralisation. Indeed, my hon. Friends and I prefer to dwell on some of the underlying themes, such as accountability and the tripartism that we believe has worked to a considerable degree in our police forces over many years. That healthy tripartism has brought the police authorities—that democratic element with an important role to play in keeping the police in touch with their grassroots—to focus on local opinion.

While my hon. Friends and I are pragmatic about having a degree of centralisation and about considering whether we should have this or that number of police forces, we are greatly against having a national police force, and we would not go down such a road with the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West.

Part of our review process has included the structure of regional government. It would be foolish not to consider the structure of police forces in relation to changing the nature of regional government. Accordingly, we would wish to consider the number of police forces at the same time as examining the regional structure. But no road that we went down would leave out the notion of strong democratic accountability about which we talked in the debate last week. Tripartism has served our police forces well, and we should not ignore that fact.

I have a mild criticism of the work of the Select Committee. As I read its report, there seems to be some neglect of the local authority point of view. Local authorities have a firm view and one would have expected the Committee to say more about local accountability and full participation. In other words, more notice should have been taken of evidence from the local authority angle. If that is not done, we can be out of balance in the evidence to which we listen, and our conclusions can, of course, be swayed by the evidence. That is a mild criticism, and I do not want to get it out of proportion.

One must bring the Home Office into the discussion when considering the common services of the police. One is in the position, as it were, of picking up a large stone in the garden and finding common police services beneath it. When one heard members of the Committee giving eloquent testimony to the appalling state of the higher police training centres and the police staff colleges, one was tempted to intervene and ask if they were still slopping out in those establishments.

Mr. Wheeler: Not quite.

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman says, "Not quite," but it sounded as if the Home Office was responsible for rather genteel slums where it expected senior policemen to spend much time. If those establishments are not up to standard, it is the Home Office's responsibility. It should get its act together and provide centres of which the police can be proud and which give the right impression to the public. I believe that people react in a positive way to the right environment. It is possible that we behave in such a ritualistic way in the Chamber because, basically, we work in a museum. If we worked within a nice modern atmosphere, perhaps we would behave like civilised human beings most of the time.

The forensic science service is another stone that I must congratulate the Select Committee on turning up. It has said that the forensic science service is pretty awful in terms of the morale of its staff and its expenditure keeping abreast of other expenditure in the police service. Many hon. Members will have learnt today that the forensic science service does not suffuse the whole of the police system. I am one of those people old enough to remember Marius Goring. I cannot remember the title of the show, but he played a forensic scientist who solved every case that came into his laboratory. I believe we still live in the days when we think that someone like Marius Goring will sort everything out. The Select Committee has shown that that is an out-of-date image. The fact is that the forensic dimension is not included in every stage of the training and retraining of our police force. Like many members of the Select Committee, I believe that forensic science must be built into police training.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) said that he believed that the forensic science service should be at the sharp end of police investigations. Forensic scientists should be working at the scene of the crime with the police and not waiting in their laboratories for samples and evidence to be sent to them.

I believe that we have done the great service of reminding the Home Office that it is in an indefensible position in that it has presided over a forensic science service with a lack of morale and expenditure—a disastrous combination. Some evidence has suggested that the police service and criminal detection are only as good as the forensic service. If that is the case, we have a great deal of ground to make up. I hope that the Minister will put on record his determination to make this top priority for expenditure. I hope that he will fight his corner with the Treasury and ensure that the expenditure comes through. After all, we are talking about £77 million for the whole of the common services, which is a tiny amount when the overall expenditure on the police is £3·5 billion.

The other aspect that I want to highlight is that common police services are and must be accountable. I was impressed by the Select Committee's report, especially on the ACOP secretariat, which is something about which the Opposition have been concerned. To some extent there has been a misrepresentation of what we disliked at the time of the miners' strike. I am perhaps striking a discordant note, but it is one that must be struck.

What the Opposition did not like about the ACPO secretariat—it was then called the national reporting centre, and is now called the mutual aid co-ordination centre—during the miners' strike was that there was no accountability. It was obvious to everyone that it was a national police effort—a national police force—that in many senses dealt with the miners' strike. If there had been accountability, the position would have been different. However, there was no accountability. The House could not ask questions of the Home Secretary because he was not responsible.

I know that I cannot have my cake and eat it, but I do not want a police system which is too centralised. Implicit in that is the building up of the ACPO role, but I want to build up that role with an accountability dimension, for which the Select Committee has come out strongly. I hope that the Minister will respond positively to that, because it goes to the heart of the good things proposed by the Select Committee.

[Mr. Sheerman]

I do not agree with everything that has been suggested by the Select Committee. One or two of the proposals have some dangers. There are certainly dangers in setting up the new agency under which services can be charged—for example, telecommunications and forensic science services. I have said in my two interventions that I believe that there will be real problems if a charging mechanism is established before we have the forensic science service functioning correctly. After all, the Home Office has a very powerful research arm.

I have the greatest respect for the Home Office research unit. Select Committees are generators of ideas, good practice and recommendations, but they do not have all the answers. Select Committees, like any other committees, are subject to fashion and fad. However, it is the job of the Select Committee to make recommendations. It is then the job of the Home Office to take on board those recommendations and have them monitored. We must be pragmatic, but we must get the forensic science service in place and monitor how good it is before we think about ways of changing the structure and perhaps having a new kind of agency. The next task—the bread and butter task—of taking the forensic science service much more seriously, funding it properly and suffusing it with police services is a priority.

The move to strengthening ACPO must be made by improving its effectiveness. It may be that strengthening ACPO is not the right answer and that the common services must be strengthened in some other way. However, I support the move to try to strengthen ACPO first.

I welcome the Select Committee reports. They are a little bland in places, but by and large they are not bad. However, I urge the Government to recognise that they have turned over a couple of rather large stones in the garden with some nasty things underneath which need to be sorted out.

I urge the Minister to be cautious in taking any steps towards centralisation, a national police force or too small a number of police forces.

We believe that accountability is absolutely essential. As I said in last week's debate on the Metropolitan police, we want a police force that is efficient, effective and incorrupt. In a modern democracy, however, the police force must be accountable. If we could combine such efficiency with accountability and retain some form of tripartism, we would be much happier than we are now.

6.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) would like, with the leave of the House, to make some concluding remarks, and for that reason I propose to confine my remarks to approximately 15 minutes. That means that I will be unable to take an overview of what has been said; I hope that the House will forgive me for that. I shall seek to reply to a number of specific points that have been raised by hon. Members, but I hope that hon. Members will forgive me if I fail to reply to them all; certainly no discourtesy is intended.

I echo what has been said by the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman). The House is grateful for the reports before us, for the careful work that the Select Committee has put into its inquiries and for the careful way in which its recommendations and comments have been marshalled. Most certainly valuable work has been done and valuable recommendations have been brought forward. The attention of the House and of the Home Office have been focused on issues to which, perhaps, we have not always given sufficient attention in the past.

I want to refer to a number of specific questions about the police college at Bramshill, the status of ACPO and related matters. I agree with the view expressed by the Select Committee that the police college should remain at Bramshill. The House may remember that, some time ago, I had departmental responsibility for the police service. I no longer have that responsibility, but when I did I visited Bramshill on several occasions and I was greatly impressed by the fabric of the building and by the work done. It would be a pity for the police college to move from Bramshill. I can reassure the Select Committee about its location.

Two issues flow from our discussion of Bramshill, one of which is accommodation. It is true that, in some respects, the accommodation is deficient, and clearly we need to contemplate a programme for upgrading the accommodation for staff and for students.

My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) asked whether it would be possible to enhance the provision made at Bramshill for overseas students. That suggestion will be considered, but it is important to remember that, the college is primarily for this country's police service. Any increase in the provision for overseas students should not be at the expense of the provision made for our country's police service.

A further point that has been raised in a number of different contexts is whether it would be sensible or possible to use proceeds from the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 to finance any of the police service, in particular Bramshill. My hon. Friends the Members for Drake and for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) also raised that point. I have responsibility for drugs policy in the Home Office and that question is raised more directly in the context of that policy. We have not yet come to a concluded view upon this matter.

The House may recall that about three weeks ago we had a debate on drugs. I then raised the possibility of setting up a central fund, not financed directly from the proceeds of drug trafficking, which could be used by individual police forces in certain circumstances. We have not come to a final conclusion, but that fund is an aspect of the debate about this matter. There is a reluctance, I think rightly, to use the proceeds of a specific source of income for specific purposes. Historically, that has been the attitude of the Treasury and it is one with which I have some sympathy. The Government and the Home Office are, however, considering whether any part of police expenses could be met, at least in part, from the proceeds of the 1986 Act. We have come to no conclusion, but in the context of our consideration I shall take into account the comments that have been made today and the recommendations of the Select Committee.

Some interesting comments have been made on the status of Bramshill in the context of a police career and on the status of ACPO. It is undoubtedly true that a number of senior officers of ACPO rank have reached that position

without having gone through the senior command course. As a general proposition, I believe that that is a pity, as all officers would benefit from participation in that course.

My hon. Friends the Members for Drake, for Westminster, North and for Ryedale suggested that participation in the senior command course should be a condition precedent of appointment to ACPO rank. We do not have a concluded view on that matter and we would certainly wish to undertake discussions. We are, however, giving it consideration and we shall consider it further against the background of what has been said today and against the recommendations of the Select Committee.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North, among others, suggested that the ACPO secretariat should be strengthened. The Government have accepted that Select Committee proposal in principle and we are now considering the financial questions that flow from such a decision. My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North also suggested that ACPO ranks should be a Home Office central grade—that suggestion was supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale. It is an interesting proposal, which would represent a major change of policy.

Mr. Wheeler: Quite so.

Mr. Hogg: I gather from that that there is not only support for a major change of policy, but a recognition that it would involve a major change of policy—both things must be kept in mind. We have not yet come to a concluded view on that particular recommendation.

Mr. Sheerman: Why not?

Mr. Hogg: Because it requires careful consideration and discussion. We shall, however, consider that proposal against the background of today's debate.

The Select Committee recommended two things regarding the status of ACPO and in particular of its committees: first, that it should be given formal status, and secondly, that it should be made accountable. Such accountability would be different from the existing accountability to which the officers are subject. The component officers of ACPO are already accountable, although they are accountable not to some central agency but to the individual forces from which they come and the police authorities that preside——

Mr. Worthington *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head, but those officers are accountable to their forces.

Mr. Worthington: I find it difficult to see how they are accountable, when each chief constable is a law unto himself and is responsible for the operational policing of his area. In that respect, there is no accountability.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman takes too narrow a view. ACPO contains not only chief constables, but deputy chief constables and assistant chief constables, and those lesser ACPO ranks—if I may so describe them in shorthand—are accountable to the chief constable. In a broad sense, the chief constable is accountable to the police authority. He is not accountable in a detailed, operational sense, but in a broad sense he is, because the authority—subject to certain provisions, checks and balances of which the hon. Gentleman knows—has the power to dismiss him.

Officers in ACPO are accountable to a variety of different authorities, and the question is whether that accountability is adequate. That question must be considered and that was recommended by the Select Committee. However, the proposed change—that we should recognise what is now a staff association as a formal body, and make its component parts responsible and accountable to a central agency—is a dramatic one, upon which we have not yet come to a concluded view.

When I was involved in the police service in the Home Office, I was troubled by the fact that participation in Bramshill did not always advance a police officer's career. I sometimes felt that there was a reluctance on the part of officers within forces to come to Bramshill, either to participate in courses or as instructors, because they feared that doing so would not receive sufficient recognition from their sponsoring force, and particularly from their sponsoring chief constable. We must come to terms with this matter, and police authorities, particularly chief constables, must recognise that the experience of Bramshill plays an important part in a police officer's career development. I attach a high importance to Bramshill.

The forensic service, quite rightly, figured largely in the debate. Charging has been the subject of much debate. The Committee recommended that the funding of the forensic service should be switched from common police services to a charge on individual police forces, based partly on capitation and partly on direct charging. The arguments for that were eloquently put by my hon. Friend the Member for Drake. I recognise that the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) does not wholly subscribe to them, but, on the whole, I find them persuasive.

Charging is a better way of determining the allocation of resources, both financial resources and the forensic facilities available. In addition, a chief constable who, under the revised system, would have to fund the process of charging, should have that discipline imposed upon him when he has to decide how best to conduct an inquiry. However, I also realise that there are a range of problems involved; accordingly, work is now in hand to discover to what extent, and how, we may carry the plan forward. We intend that any new funding arrangement should be in place within the next three years, if possible by April 1991.

Manpower is a subject which has been much debated this evening. As the House will know, we are already committed to bringing the service up to complement. It is now about 23 under complement, and over the next two years we shall recruit an additional 28 officers. The Committee took the view that a greater expansion in manpower was required. We shall certainly consider that recommendation. We need to come to an assessment based on cost benefit and the financial implications.

On the subject of agency status, the House will know——

Mr. Worthington *rose——*

Mr. Hogg: I am anxious to complete my speech, as I would like to let the Chairman of the Committee make some final remarks.

The House will know that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has announced that the service is a suitable candidate for agency status.

I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) raised the issue of the working party report

[Mr. Hogg]

on pathology. I am pleased to say that it will be produced later this month—I think that phraseology will be acceptable to the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell).

I am conscious that I have not answered all the questions raised, and apologise for that. However, it was not possible to do so because I, and I am sure the House, would like to let the final word rest with the Chairman of the Committee, who has presided over such a valuable series of reports.

7.7 pm

Mr. Wheeler: With the leave of the House, I would like to bring this important debate to a conclusion. May I say on behalf of the Home Affairs Committee that this has been a valuable three hours which has enabled us to explore in greater detail on the Floor of the House some important issues and to discover the consensus which exists in the Chamber as a whole.

The Committee fully understands that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State was unable to be definitive in his reply to some of the points raised in this debate and to many of the recommendations that the Committee has presented to the House and the Home Secretary. We fully appreciate that some of those recommendations are substantial—even controversial—and require careful consideration. But we are grateful to the Home Secretary and to the Home Office for the work which they are doing in analysing our recommendations and the evidence which supports them.

In this debate this afternoon, no fewer than five Committee members have had the opportunity to present their own points of view and to discuss the Committee's reports. Three other hon. Members, whom I might describe as outsiders to the work of the Committee, have been able to make a very worthwhile contribution, for which the Committee as a whole is most grateful.

In the one or two moments which I have left, I shall simply touch upon some of the key points. I imagine that for us all, the central theme of this afternoon's debate has been effectiveness, efficiency and accountability. It is common to both sides of the House that we wish to see those three cardinal principles in our police system in the United Kingdom and, particularly in England and Wales. Therefore, I share many of the views of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) who spoke for the official Opposition. We found that there is much in common, although there are differences—perhaps about the nature of the structure of the police service in England and Wales. As is well known, I tend to favour central services through the common police services which are accountable and well organised, and I see the development of a regionalised police system in England and Wales. There may be differences here, but there are also common strands.

I thought that the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), who is such a fine ornament upon the Committee, made a splendid comment when he suggested that research was essential to analysing the value of the forensic science service, which is a point that the Committee has made.

My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) made an admirable contribution about charging for the forensic science service and put that case in a nutshell, for which I was most grateful to her. She also emphasised the value of Bramshill to overseas students. This is of particular importance in our fight against international drug trafficking, because we are able to bring people from other police services into our police college to understand our philosophy and the advantages that go with it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) made a memorable contribution when he analysed the role of ACPO and its work. He raised the interesting proposition of a central support committee—something to which I am sure we would wish to give further consideration.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) raised the issue of disaster planning for emergency services. It is possible that the Committee may want to give further thought to that, too.

On the whole, this has been a valuable debate and the House has greatly profited from it.

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings.*

The Question necessary to dispose of the proceedings was deferred, pursuant to paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of Estimates).

ROYAL ASSENT

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989.
2. Water Act 1989.
3. Wesleyan Assurance Society Act 1989.

ESTIMATES DAY

[2ND ALLOTTED DAY]

ESTIMATES 1989-90

Class V, Vote 2

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY: SUPPORT FOR INDUSTRY

Information Technology

[Relevant documents: First Report from the Trade and Industry Committee of Session 1988-89 on Information Technology (House of Commons Paper No. 25), the Government's White Paper on Information Technology (Cm. 646) and the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee on 26th April 1989 (House of Commons Paper No. 338-i).]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a further sum, not exceeding £322,022,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1990, for expenditure by the Department of Trade and Industry at its research establishments (including the National Measurement Accreditation Service) and on the running costs of certain of its headquarters divisions, in its radiocommunications division and the Patent Office, support for industry (including industrial research and development, education, training, design, quality, marketing, management best practice and standards, business development and aircraft and aeroengine research and development), space technology programmes, protection of innovation, international trade (including export promotion, trade co-operation and international exhibitions), enterprise and job creation (the inner cities initiative and city action teams), miscellaneous support services, grants in aid, international subscriptions, provision of land and buildings, loans, grants, and other payments.—*[Mr. Forth.]*

7.11 pm

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): I declare an interest in the subject for debate, having been associated with the information technology industry since before entering Parliament.

Our reason for selecting this subject stems from a decision in December 1987 to inquire into information technology. It was in particular the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), who apologises for not being able to be with us, who conceived the idea of the debate, based on the growing worry about this country's trade deficit in information technology goods. It was big then, it is bigger now and it is growing remorselessly larger.

The subsequent hearings that we held throughout last year culminated in a report published in December; three months later we received a White Paper from the Government.

The White Paper was eagerly awaited. Unfortunately, when it arrived it was somewhat misleading. I am sure that my hon. Friends who served on the Committee will enlarge on the problems that we encountered.

We were aware that the DTI had misunderstood the report's axes of argument, and its acceptance rate for our 52 recommendations was only 28, which is not as high as we are usually awarded when we place a report before Parliament to which the DTI then responds. Perhaps the Department would have preferred us to consider petrol prices at the pumps—we considered that as a subject for debate—or shipbuilding: the Government seem to give aid to private shipyards which is not available to the nationalised yards. Or we might have called for a popular debate on beer and the tied houses, but we stuck to information technology because I had called for a debate on it in Government time, but unfortunately the Leader of the House could not see his way to giving us one.

It is interesting to read in *The Independent* today that its technology correspondent, Mary Fagan, draws attention to a document which came from inside the DTI which states:

"Internal briefing papers told DTI officials to resist a Commons debate"

on information technology.

We have this debate in our time now and we look forward to exploiting the two hours and 48 minutes that are left——

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): I fully understand my hon. Friend's point about the importance of the debate. On behalf of the parliamentary information technology committee I may say that we greatly value the thorough work that went into this report, and I assure my hon. Friend that we shall continue to help him in any way we can to further the debate in the coming weeks.

Mr. Warren: I am most grateful for that support from the chairman of the parliamentary information technology committee which does so much useful work on behalf of the House and the industry.

We have had tussles with the DTI before on tin and on Westland, when we held inquiries, but in general it may surprise the House to know that we reached broad agreement on the proposals that we made on British Steel, on the Rover Group and on trade with China, eastern Europe and so on. Unfortunately, the information technology problem remains, and our unanimous proposals have been misinterpreted.

These proposals were arrived at after a year—long presentation of the most skilful evidence from across the industry, collected by the Committee in Europe, Japan and the United States.

I could not resist bringing to the attention of the House a quotation by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs, who waited until the Select Committee was safely over the border in Scotland to look at financial services for 1992 before saying:

"This old-fashioned idea of the gargantuan dinosaur of Government, directing the sector by procurement policies, is . . . typical of Select Committee members but not modern Government policy."—[*Official Report*, 19 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. 385.]

It is a pity that my hon. Friend said that, because I am sure that he has since had a chance to read the report—clearly he had not read it at the time. No doubt he will be pleased to know that the Select Committee is eagerly looking forward to the chance of welcoming him with its usual courtesy, as soon as it can.

We also welcome my hon. Friend's self-announced appointment to his post. Our right hon. and noble Friend in another place said that there would be no Minister of information technology but at a recent press conference, our hon. Friend the Minister told us:

"I am your friendly Minister of IT".

[Mr. Warren]

We did not ask for a Minister of information technology, and the noble Lord did not expect one to be appointed. We hope that this self-appointment will survive any future shuffle.

I have always regarded my hon. Friend in good heart as a man who can be relied upon to pour oil on troubled waters. I note that he is not wearing his usual admirable watch chain, perhaps knowing that it has a dry tinder box attached to it. Nevertheless, I could not let the moment pass without telling my hon. Friend that the Committee was not happy with his view, which I am sure he will want to amend if he catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The report contains two main themes. No one knows better that my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General, whom I welcome to the debate, that Government as a business operation need information technology on a scale that they do not yet appreciate. Secondly, the United Kingdom trade deficit is the cause of growing national concern and it cannot be wished away by selective statistics.

The business of Government is labour-intensive—it is probably the most labour-intensive business in the country. Two of the tables in the report show the number of civil servants with computer workstations, and how many will have them in 1993. Table 12 shows that the major Departments of State have about 0·3 workstations per civil servant. By 1993, that will have risen to an average of 0·5.

The best current practice is between 0·5 and, in the most advanced offices in private enterprise, 1 per person. The Government need to bring in a lot more technology because they face a major problem that they have not yet dealt with. Between now and 1993 the total number of people in the 18 to 24 age group, which is 6 million now, will drop to 4·8 million—a fall of 20 per cent. in potential recruits. Although I trust that the Conservative Government will continue to prosper through those years, I fear that they will not find themselves the most attractive employers for young people who will be the subject of intense competition in efforts to drag them away into highly paid jobs in other industries which can afford to pay more than the Government.

The only solution, with which the Government must come to grips, given the labour-intensive nature——

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Why is my hon. Friend concentrating so hard on the under-24-year-olds? Information technology is eminently suited to the recruitment of middle-aged people, particularly women who work from home or part time. Government are part-time employers of notable success, and they offer job sharing and good working practices. It would be easy to train those over 24 in modern IT, which is so user-friendly, so why does my hon. Friend concentrate so heavily on the younger age group?

I am concerned that the percentages to which my hon. Friend has referred may be slightly misleading. I refer especially to computerisation within Government and workstations. My hon. Friend will recall the central head office technology system which is being introduced to the Ministry of Defence, which is commonly known as CHOPS. With its introduction there will be 75,000 terminals. There will be a terminal on each senior manager's desk. My hon. Friend will——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Lady is making a long intervention. I am sure that she will catch the eye of the Chair in due course.

Mr. Warren: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her intervention, and especially for the information about the Ministry of Defence. When the Committee asked it how many computer workstations it had, its first response was to tell us that it did not know. Secondly, the Minister told us that it could not give us the information because it was secret. I was inclined to think——

Miss Nicholson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Warren: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I shall proceed with my speech. I am sure that she will be able to catch the eye of the Chair later in the debate. As I have said, I am delighted to have the information about the Ministry of Defence to which she drew our attention. I still feel, however, that it did not know how many computer workstations it had.

I accept my hon. Friend's argument about the age group that I have selected, but I want to illustrate a problem that must be regarded as inevitable. There will not be enough people entering the labour market in the next five years to take up the job opportunities that will be available. I accept, of course, that there are job opportunities that involve the use of information technology throughout the age ranges. I wish that I could stand with my hon. Friend and believe that IT is all user-friendly. My experience is that it is usually antagonistic when I am using it. That is probably the result of bad luck over the years.

I draw the attention of the House—I hesitate to do this after my hon. Friend's intervention—to yet one more table in the report. It will be the last table with which I shall burden the House. It sets out the number of personal computers that are available in the home. It shows that Britain has much greater experience of the use of personal computers, whether they be for home use, for a hobby, for business or for scientific work, than America, Spain, France, West Germany, Italy and Sweden, for example.

That takes me again to the 18 to 24-year-olds and the problem that the Government will have in recruiting young people to fill the job opportunities that they will have. The people in that age group will expect information technology to be commonplace. They will be used to playing around with keyboards and screens and they will expect to be well equipped with information technology when they take up employment. I believe that the Government will have an even more difficult recruiting task than perhaps they have appreciated and identified so far.

It is true that we do not work at home, and I do not suggest that any Member of this place, let alone my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, would wish to do so. I ask the Government, however, to examine more closely and severely the communications systems that are available in the market place and to bear in mind those that will be coming forward. The Macdonald committee, the members of which were not in business or in industry, advised the Government on communications. It even stated in its report that it did not choose to discuss the matter with those who are in industry or in communications.

That is disappointing. It is communication systems in which the greatest use of information technology must be found and developed over the next 10 to 20 years. I have

a personal desire to see a wide band communication system developed that can take voice and data so that the country can be as competitive as it needs to be in developments that go beyond 1992 for use in the financial services sector, for example.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Warren: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I choose to continue with my speech. I am sure that she will catch the eye of the Chair in due course.

Miss Nicholson *rose*——

Mr. Warren: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Miss Nicholson: I remind my hon. Friend of Britain's enormous success in using the Packet switching system to such effect through the introduction of Mercury, which has brought competition to British Telecom. We now have one of the largest customer databases and international data transmissions in the world. We have been enormously successful with British Telecom and Mercury in the use of the Packet switching system, and this has brought exactly the result that my hon. Friend is seeking.

Mr. Warren: With respect, it has not. It does not allow for the sort of communication systems that will be required in the next decade in Britain and throughout the rest of Europe and the western world. The fact is that it is not a wide band system. I shall be more than delighted to give my hon. Friend a private lecture on the subject on another occasion. I hope that she will accept for the moment that the problem is that we do not have communication systems that are adequate to meet the expectations of those who want to compete—whether they be in Scotland or Ireland—with the rest of the European community.

In today's edition of *The Times* there is a fine article that draws attention once again—this has been repeated over and over again in the national and technical press—to the number of skilled employees that will be required. The National Computing Centre Ltd. believes that the present shortage of 19,000 staff will rise to over 35,000 within a year. We are talking about those who are well skilled and well trained in the art of information technology. It must be recognised that it is an art and not only a science, especially when the proverbial bugs are running around inside the equipment.

We have a trade deficit problem and it is not confined to information technology goods. It is an enormous problem that stretches across manufacturing industry. The deficit is running at £17,000 million a year. I worked out late last night—I hope that I got the zeros right—that it amounted to about £50 million a day, or £33,000 every minute around the clock. To offset that, we shall have to export and sell six more Metros a minute.

The two major components of the trade deficit are, surprisingly enough, German motor cars, which account for about £5 billion-worth of imports a year, and information technology, the imports of which amount to about £2·5 billion a year. In third place is the importation of material that is required by the paper industry. We have a major problem and the Committee sought to adress it. It is one that cannot be wished away by selective statistics. It is an enormous problem and it does not matter what other countries are doing. It can be mastered, however, by the talents and resources that are to be found within the United Kingdom. That could be done if I could only persuade the Government to be drawn into collaborating, co-operating and seeking to close the gap.

I ask the Government to examine their track record. When the Committee tried to identify the Government's work in this area, it was disappointed to find that reports such as that produced by the Bide committee in 1986 received no response. One of the recommendations was that work should be undertaken on a fail-safe system for British Rail. If that recommendation had been adopted in 1986, some of the recent rail crashes—I do not like to speculate—might have been avoided. That applies as well to some that might yet come. To reject the work of so many over such a long time is not conducive to persuading more people to come forward to collaborate with the Government on inquiries which they may wish to initiate.

The reaction to the Committee's report has perhaps been better than the reviews which the Government were prepared to give us. I shall refer to some of them. The Cranfield Technology Institute stated:

"We support each of the 52 recommendations."

There was a response from IBM, which read:

"I . . . congratulate you on the accuracy with which you have pinpointed the most critical issues."

The Electronic Engineering Association commented on an

"able, interesting and well-written document on the current state of the IT industry in the United Kingdom."

The professor of computing at the university of Kent reported:

"I was pleased to read that the Committee was trying to shake up the system."

We are still trying to do that.

The Hoskyns Group said:

"Excellent . . . the task now is to ensure that the report is not buried alongside Bide and Coopers."

The British Computer Society said that the report

"gives Government a real opportunity to simultaneously improve the effectiveness of its own operation and the performance of United Kingdom industry."

The comment that I really like, Madam Deputy Speaker—and I am sure that it will appeal to you—comes from the female managing director of a computer company which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister visited. She said:

"I don't know if she will go back and give the DTI a handbagging about the report . . . but I feel she should."

When my hon. Friend the Minister replies, we shall find out whether he is suffering from the slings and arrows of outrageous handbags.

The Government's track record is not a happy one. The National Computing Centre was asked by my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State if the report would give him some idea of skills requirements for several years hence. The industry had invested £100,000 of its own money in the report, which was started in January 1986, but no reply has been received. The DTI may well run into some difficulty with those who are anxious for a partnership to develop with Government if nothing happens after all their efforts. We had high hopes that the report and the White Paper would guide us towards a partnership that needs both the help and the interest of Government and that looks upon Government as a major customer.

The Committee's work was not to pick winners or losers. Nevertheless, the PA Consulting Group—which is used extensively by the Government—said in a report entitled "Winners or Losers":

[Mr. Warren]

"No one seems to know what to do as far as IT is concerned".

An article in "The Management Edge" by David Harvey stated:

"Corporate systems in two thirds of UK companies will not withstand the competitive strains imposed by the single European market. The warning comes as the countdown to 1992 reduces the room for any serious preparation to be carried out."

Because of the downturn in engineering orders this year, the Government—who are a major market-maker—must tell us what they propose to do. They say that they will not intervene, but I could list several Government interventions by the DTI, beginning on 8 February. For a Department that does not want to intervene, it is a remarkable somersault. Its most amazing intervention—of which I happen to approve—occurred on 19 June when it launched the open systems technology transfer programme at a cost of £12 million. In doing so, it must have picked a winner. It could have picked another one, but it did not. Of course, I cannot refer to the winner because that would be unfair to the loser. To my regret, during the past few years in information technology there has been a remarkable propensity, especially by the Ministry of Defence, to pick losers—to the tune of £1 billion in a recent project.

The Government cannot claim that they are not in the business of picking winners when not only do they pick a winner but they spend £1·8 billion of taxpayers' money each year to sustain their IT requirements. The black knight of intervention has stealthily come among us. That is evident in the recommendations of the report that have not been accepted. Time and again we can enumerate and cross-check interventions against the report's recommendations, although those recommendations have not been accepted in the White Paper. I feel that there has been, perhaps, a slightly sinister change of policy.

A report in the *Financial Times* on 26 June by Mr. Alan Cane stated:

"Concern that British computing services companies are not yet geared to competing successfully against foreign companies for large contracts has prompted a Government 'initiative' that comes close to contravening the spirit, if not the letter, of international directives on open competition."

Companies are being invited to receive quiet, informal advice from the DTI. One of the bidders is quoted as saying that the DTI

"is saying that they will put extra votes your way for an all-British consortium."

Neither my hon. Friend nor I is an interventionist, but that is something of a volte-face by a Government who, apparently, do not believe in intervention but who, in fact, are surreptitiously encouraging it. Companies are being encouraged to discuss their bids with the DTI and the CCTA, which in turn will give information to help them win contracts. That is a change of policy. I am not saying that that is wrong, but the Government's policy on intervention should be publicly stated.

I know that many other hon. Members wish to speak in the debate, Madam Deputy Speaker *[Interruption.]* I have known you for a long time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I really did not expect to see you clad in such a manner. You will no doubt understand my problems in Committee when hon. Members laugh at me—although it is normal to laugh at the Chairman.

The task of developing IT understanding is colossal, but it is something from which the Government cannot escape. I welcome collaboration provided that it is creative and promotes Government understanding that they cannot avoid being a player in the market place. It may sound like Powellite philosophy, but the Government say that they will not intervene in the buying decisions for £1·8 billion equipment, yet they are buying between 10 per cent. and 20 per cent. of total output for their own civil and military uses.

The Government and the DTI do not have to set themselves up as judges on the merits of the people and the products in the IT marketplace. However, they must understand that their process of choice is antiquated and expensive. Indeed, major suppliers say that it costs them three times as much and takes them three times as long to bid to Government as it does to comparable outside enterprises. Because the Government are the largest single buyer, spending billions of pounds each year, their choice affects the operation of the market place.

I have a rather worrying personal concern that in a country built on talent and surrounded by opportunity the Government do not recognise their unique duty of leadership by constantly seeking to open new areas of prosperity for our nation. That is the inherent challenge of the Committee's IT report and the reason that we have selected it for debate tonight. We want the Government to accept their duty and to act. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will respond with understanding.

7.38 pm

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): I am happy to follow the Committee's distinguished chairman, the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren). He has not left a great deal for other Committee members to say. I appreciate the splendid way in which he advanced the Committee's views.

Because of the short time available for this debate, I shall be brief—although I intend to concentrate on a matter of crucial importance to British industry. I felt that the hon. Gentleman was displaying his customary generosity when he suggested that the Government had misunderstood the Committee's report. The alternative is that they understood it perfectly well, but reacted in an extraordinarily stupid way. It may be that they have misunderstood it. Perhaps I should be as kind as the hon. Gentleman.

The Select Committee spent a vast amount of time on the inquiry. There were 15 sittings in the House and we took many thousands of words of written evidence as well. We travelled around the world talking to people in Japan and all the way across the United States. We then produced a report containing 52 recommendations which was warmly welcomed by the industry. The hon. Member for Hastings and Rye has quoted a few of the comments that we have received from the industry, but they are merely a few out of a vast number of comments that we have received, all extremely complimentary to the report. Unfortunately, the report was dismissed peremptorily by the Secretary of State. It is sad that he should have reacted in such a way.

I emphasise that the report was unanimous. Every member of the Committee agreed with every recommendation in it. I do not intend to deal with its technical

aspects—other hon. Members are much more qualified than I am to do that—but I want to make one or two comments on the political aspects of this matter.

This is not a matter of party division. Again, I emphasise that the report was unanimous. The argument between the Select Committee and the Secretary of State on this matter goes to the heart of the ideological divide in British politics today. It is entirely a question whether a British Government have a duty to make decisions and to implement policies which are positively in the interests of British industries and British companies.

This is the only Government in the industrial world who make a virtue of neutrality in that matter. They are certainly the first Government in British history who have taken the view that it does not matter whether British industries sink or swim and that it is nothing to do with them. I know of no previous Government of any party who have taken that view, but that seems to be the well-established policy of successive Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry, of whom we have had a large number in the past 10 years—about eight.

Those Ministers have all claimed a great attachment to what they call market forces. I am not against market forces, but we need to remember that market forces do not come down from heaven. They are not created by some extra-terrestrial body. They are very much created and conditioned by Government policies—for example on energy costs, interest rates, exchange rates and, in the particular context of the matter that we are discussing, public procurement.

Let me refer briefly to the Government's response to our report on that matter of public procurement. They said:

> "The Government do not consider that public procurement should be used as a policy instrument to pull through technology."

We never suggested that it should be an instrument to pull through technology. All that we were suggesting was that in their public procurement policy it would not be a bad thing for a British Government to pay some attention to British industry. That may have been a misunderstanding, but if it was it was a serious one.

Government policies on matters such as education, training and research in the area that we are debating are of enormous importance in conditioning what turn out in the end to be market forces. For example, no one can seriously dispute that the success of the United States IT industry in the civilian field owes a great deal to the enormous amount of taxpayers' money which the Department of Defence spends on research—a perfectly proper use of the taxpayers' money. I am not necessarily suggesting that the Ministry of Defence should adopt the same policy here; I merely mention that as an example of the way in which Government expenditure can be used to benefit the economy, obviously including the private sector.

Those are ways in which market forces are determined by the use of Government policy and resources, and I would like to see that happening here. However, the Government's response to the report, effectively saying that that is not their job and has nothing to do with them, is unfortunate.

The Ministry of International Trade and Industry in Japan clearly, openly and obviously devotes its policies entirely to the promotion of the Japanese national interest. Nobody makes any secret of that. If the Japanese have tended to open the Japanese market to foreign imports more than they have in the past, it is only because they perceive that to be in the Japanese national interest.

In the highly competitive world in which we live, I see nothing wrong in any Government adopting that policy. But the British Government's attitude, as we perceived it during the inquiry, as during many other inquiries, is that, although they want British industry to make the best possible use of information technology, it does not matter much to them where the equipment comes from; whether it is made in Britain or imported. They do not care much about the future of Britain's indigenous IT manufacturing industry. The hon. Member for Hastings and Rye pointed out the appallingly high trade deficit in that area. We and the Government should be worried about that.

The Government have said that they are not prepared to make use of their enormous purchasing power to assist in and encourage the development of the British IT manufacturing industry. They are wrong to say that. I hope that they will think again about what we have said in our report. Again, I emphasise that this is not a matter of an ideological difference between parties. The report, like all our reports, was unanimous.

I do not want to be told about our international obligations under EC rules, the general agreement on tariffs and trade and all that kind of thing. I see that the Minister nods, so I fear that I may be told about it. lest I shall be told about it, let me say at once that I have heard it all before. I also know that other Governments, who are similarly bound by identical rules, manage to find a way of protecting the interests of their own industries and of making sure that their own industries develop in the competitive world in which we live.

I never quite understand why we should be the only ones who say that there is nothing we can do because of the international rules. When we talked to people in Japan, the United States and throughout western Europe—yes, even in the EC—we found a very different attitude. The Minister knows perfectly well that there is not another Government in western Europe who will sit supinely back and see its own industries destroyed by competition from outside if there is something that can be done about it. There is something that the Government can do, but I am afraid that they are refusing to do it.

Where there is a will there is a way and it is up to the Government to find the way. It is time that we had pro-British policies from the British Government.

7.48 pm

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): I am glad to hear that the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) has joined the comparatively select band of those who have been to Japan, the United States and elsewhere in Europe to look specifically at the information technology industry. Rather like those astronauts who go into space and never see the world in quite the same way again, hon. Members who have shared that experience never quite see the problems in exactly the same light again.

This is an old stamping ground of mine, but I feel something of an interloper in what is a vital and important argument between my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) and my noble Friend Lord Young representing the Government. The hon. Member for Rotherham has touched on the crucial and sensitive aspects of this vital debate.

[Sir Ian Lloyd]

I am indebted, as I am sure are the House and the country, to my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye for having produced a remarkably comprehensive and interesting report which deserves, and I hope will continue to receive, the closest possible scrutiny. I have read not only the report but the Government's White Paper in response to it. Before commenting on both, I think it fair to say that the interchange between Select Committees and the Government provides a crucial fulcrum on which the balance between Government policy and the views of its critics can be weighed. It is very much in the public interest that that should be done seriously and openly, as it is this evening on the Floor of the House.

I congratulate the Government on responding positively and constructively to certain parts of the report. On reading the White Paper, I particularly welcomed the recognition in paragraph 5.14 of the significance of the international trading market. Recalling the remarks that had been made about Japan, I never forget for one moment that whatever may be Japan's success on one side of the coin, it depends on the other side of the coin, which is the virtually completely free access that Japanese products have to the OECD world trading market. Neither the Japanese nor anyone else should be allowed to forget that. Therefore, I welcome also the Government's emphasis on the general agreement on tariffs and trade and on access to international markets. Whatever happens, it is important that our policies result in such access.

Before giving my critical reactions, I shall set the scene. Since I last spoke on the subject—which was quite a while ago—the cost of semiconductors per function has fallen by 75 per cent. It has fallen by half since the report was printed. The size of the information technology deficit has increased enormously and the scale of the IT industry in the United Kingdom, in Europe and worldwide has expanded at a prodigious rate. The world economy now benefits to the tune of the massive figure of 400 billion dollars. About 15 years ago, I said that by the end of the century, IT would be the world's largest industry. Now I believe that that target will be exceeded and that if IT is not already the world's largest industry, it will be within the next few years.

I very much regret that Britain has sold to France one of its most outstanding examples of information technology, the transputer. United States' investment in microelectronics in 1986—the latest year for which we have figures—reached the colossal equivalent of £60 billion. The figure for France was £8 billion. In 1987, Japan's output of information technology products was 97 billion dollars. By comparison, the total for the EEC was more or less a comparable figure, while that for the United Kingdom was only $22 billion, or one fifth of that for the Community.

Japan's research and development expenditure now stands at 6·9 billion dollars and is second only to that of the United States, which spends nearly 20 billion dollars. Japan's expenditure is now double that of the United Kingdom, at 3·1 billion dollars. It is a matter of the greatest regret that not one United Kingdom firm features in the list of top 10 companies in respect of computers, telecommunications or semiconductors. Japan completley dominates the export market for consumer electronics, with a 63 per cent. share, compared with 5 per cent. for the United States—which is an interesting figure, because it represents a very rapid change from a position of dominance—and 4 per cent. for the United Kingdom, with 27 per cent. for the whole of the European Community.

A specific and significant statistic is that relating to installed robots, upon which so much of industry's performance depends. The figures are most alarming. The total number of installed robots in Japan is 82,500; in the United States, it is 25,000; in Germany, 12,000; in France, 5,000; and in the United Kingdom, 3,600. If one reflects on those statistics, one draws at all points the conclusion that the diffusion, of microelectronic technologies is now the main driving force of all the OECD economies. The greater the diffusion, the greater the growth rate, the greater the prosperity and the greater the market dominance. The correlation is very clear and very specific.

I turn to research and development, and hope that I shall interest the House with two technical examples. The first transistor was developed in 1955 or 1956. I recall holding a copy of one in my hand in the House. It had four gates. Today's commercial integrated circuits have 1 million gates. Laboratories are producing circuits with 4 million to 6 million gates, and the cutting edge of science is what are known as gigaflop systems having 1 billion gates. That stage has not yet been reached, but in the field of molecular electronics the cutting edge of science is getting very close.

At the Carnegie Mellon centre in the United States, work is continuing on 400 megabit optical random access memories, which means having 400 million devices on one small memory chip. Even more exciting is the use of that device in super-computers using what is known as bacteriorhodopsin. That extraordinary material is found in the photosynthetic apparatus of bacteria on the shores of San Francisco, and it can be used as a bistable optical switch—that is, as a semiconductor, because it can signal either on or off—with the phenomenal switching speed of 1 million millionths of a second. When used with laser technology, it offers the prospect of computers that can operate thousands of times faster than the comparatively small number of supercomputers that currently exist throughout the world. A combination of semiconductors of that kind with polymer surfaces presents the possibility of developing artificial vision for computers before the end of the century—and we should reflect on what that could mean for humanity.

I refer to two other important developments. Fujitsu has produced the first Japanese to English translation system—and what a shame that that was done in Japan—using a 32-bit personal computer. The price will be around £2,200, and the expected revenue is around £45 million in three years. The questions I ask are, why not us, and why not here? Even more depressing is that the first Josephson junction processor has also been produced by Fujitsu. It is based on the prototype developed by a brilliant young Englishman, Dr. Josephson of Trinity college, Cambridge. Again I ask the questions, why not us, why not here? When considering British information technology policy, we cannot escape asking such questions, whatever may be our arguments about the right method of dealing with the problems involved. Only this morning I heard that a young scientist in Hong Kong is close to developing a computer that will recognise spoken Mandarin, and the possible market for that is 1 billion Chinese.

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): My hon. Friend mentioned a number of fascinating developments and quite properly asked the questions, why not us, why not here? Is he suggesting that companies or the Government should have played a part?

Sir Ian Lloyd: I shall not escape that question. It is important and I shall try to answer it directly.

It has been pointed out that the United States car industry has installed three super-computers. In the same article, we were told that Nissan has installed two which are so much more powerful than the three available to the whole of the United States car industry that they will be able to design, develop and crash a motor car without even building a prototype. Does the British motor car industry have access to that technology? If not, why not? Where does the responsibility lie?

These machines cost an enormous amount, between £7 million and £15 million. There are a few hundred in the world and only three in the United Kingdom, but they are of the utmost importance. I am glad to say that Europe is not asleep. The European sub-micron silicon initiative involves a £2·7 billion programme and the intention is to increase the present density of integrated circuits by 10, to increase their size by 2·5 times and to extend the elements of memory from 40 million to 200 million—still well below the figure that I gave earlier—and the elements of logic from 2 million to 10 million.

The world market for super-computers has been estimated to be £100 billion by the year 2000. Those who support the JESSI programme—the European sub-micron programme—say that, with luck and if we do it properly and get it right, Europe's share may be £17 billion. Paragraph 5.5 of the White Paper "Information Technology" states:

"The Government have no plans to require the creation of a national broadband network based on fibreoptic cable."

I contrast that with what is happening in Japan and the United States. In Japan, it has been stated that the intention is to create a fully integrated digital communication structure using broadband fibre-optic microware.

I hope that the House will forgive me if I quote fairly extensively from Senator Gore's speech on the so-called Gore Bill in the United States. He said:

"High-performance computing is the most powerful tool available to those who, in an increasing number of fields, are operating at the frontiers of imagination and intellect. The nation which most completely assimilates high-performance computing into its economy will very likely emerge as the dominant intellectual, economic, and technological force in the next century."

I fully concur with that judgment. Senator Gore went on:

"If the United States is going to be a supercomputer superpower in the 1990s, we had better start building a high-capacity, national research and education network today."

He argued:

"A national network with associated supercomputers . . . will cluster research centres and businesses around network interchanges, using the Nation's vast data banks as the building blocks for increasing industrial productivity, creating new products, and improving access to education."

How, he asks, is this to be done? Now we come to the centre of the debate. Senator Gore said:

"Can we rely on the market system to provide this kind of infrastructure? We certainly couldn't where the Interstate Highway System was concerned . . . I believe that the Federal Government must again be a catalyst . . . Clearly, the technological spinoffs and productivity gains would be enormous, from a network that would cost the Government less than one Stealth bomber."

Senator Gore went on to develop in some detail what he hoped the Bill would do for the United States. He spoke of

"putting in place a three gigabit per second"—

not 3 million, which is our standard—

"national research and education computer network by 1996 . . . including a National Digital Library . . . projects like neural networks; . . . basic research and education; . . . stimulating the development of hardware; . . . enhancing the development and distribution of software".

Senator Gore said:

"This bill would also authorise $1·75 billion over 5 years, fiscal years 1990 through 1994, to carry out the purposes of the act. The investment is tiny and the payback enormous".

He said:

"the only long-term deficit solution is to get away from short-term thinking, look to the future, and invest in the people, technologies, and equipment that will ensure our standard of living and increase productivity."

That is what is happening or is about to happen in the United States and Japan. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Minister does not think that that is happening. Doubtless he will reply in due course. If I am wrong, I stand corrected. If it is not happening after what has been put forward, I should be surprised if it does not happen fairly soon. If this or something like it does not happen fairly soon in Japan, I shall be even more surprised.

We come to the question: how is this to be done? I am coming to a sensitive matter. I have just read the exchanges with Lord Young when he appeared for the second time before the Trade and Industry Committee and answered probing questions on ministerial responsibility. I disagree with both parties, which puts me in a difficult position. I do not disagree with the objective of my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren)—it is extremely sound—nor do I agree with Lord Young's attempt to play down the significance of this ministerial post. It has been played down, largely on the ground that everyone now knows about information technology and everyone now uses it and therefore there is no need for central responsibility. It is like saying of the Treasury, "Everyone knows about money and we really do not need a Chancellor of the Exchequer." I acknowledge that the analogy is imperfect.

I can claim some responsibility for this debate because I put up a paper in 1978 that developed the concept of a Minister for Information Technology. I was delighted when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister came to power in 1979 and appointed the present Secretary of State for Education and Science to that post. While he was Minister for Information Technology, we made much progress. He was one of the few hon. Members, and certainly one of the few right hon. Members, with a clear appreciation of what this was all about. While he was in that position, he drove things forward and we were conscious that the nation had as the Minister for Information Technology someone with a grasp, determination and understanding of information technology. Alas, ambition and other things beckoned and the sad clothes of the Minister for Information Technology were dropped, like Cinderella's, into the wastepaper basket, and my right hon. Friend moved on to other and better things. As a result, the nation may have missed out, even if it has gained in other ways.

Mr. Crowther: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that during the reign of that Minister for Information Technology we developed a considerable trade deficit in that business?

Sir Ian Lloyd: That may be so, but the reasons for the development of the trade deficit, in both the United Kingdom and western Europe as a whole, and in the United States, are deep-seated. This is the obverse of the remarkable sense of vision, determination and organisation—almost unique in the history of the industrial world—that was displayed in Japan. I came across it for the first time in 1970, when a Japanese Minister of State with specific responsibility for information technology told a visiting delegation from Europe that information technology in Japan bore the same relationship to industrial power as coal did to industrial power in the 19th century. I have never forgotten that, just as I have never forgotten the vigour, force and conviction of that man's statement.

What are the solutions? There are many, but I favour one particular solution. I am sorry to have to say that I disagree with my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I probably disagree with many others. We need this focus. If the whole record is in any sense a judgment of whether this decision is right or wrong, I believe that that record is wholeheartedly on my side and no one else's. I stick to that judgment because I have made it on the Floor of the House for almost 25 years. Events are what count and events have proved me increasingly right.

As a country, we cannot afford to fail in this area. We must think much harder and we must be more effective. We must see a national and European leadership emerging in this sphere. Our science, our inventiveness and our technology are all equal to the challenge and I have every confidence in them. However, our institutions are not, and I have less confidence in them.

Senator Gore talked about talent and determination. We have almost a superfluity of talent and the very best talent in this country is second to none. We have rather less determination. Let us put talent and determination together. When we have done so, let us use them.

8.10 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I will not attempt to follow the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) with the great deal of technical knowledge he has revealed. However, I hope that he will agree that one does not have to have that degree of technical knowledge to be able to approach this subject and to recognise its importance. The information technology industry, regrettably, has its own technology, terminology, statistics and jargon, as many industries do. As a result, many people tend to shut it out, and to think that it is not for them and not terribly important.

However, the advent of the development of information technology can be compared with the invention of the printing press, the railways, and the internal combustion engine all rolled into one. It is—or represents when used and developed properly—a major leap forward in the way that we organise our business, the means of production and our daily lives. It has already had a substantial impact, but I suspect that its eventual impact will be far greater.

There are some simple, practical aspects of information technology to which we can all relate, given our everyday experiences of the past 24 hours. The habit has built up over generations that people congregate in great cities. I do not believe that that development will be fundamentally reversed, but technology can enable a more sensible balance of time and place to be organised. Many of us use new technology every day when communicating with our constituency offices. I and many other hon. Members have word processors and fax machines at home to enable us to communicate between our homes and secretaries. Those are simple examples of information technology, but they have made an enormous difference to the speed with which information can be transferred. With the development of super-computers, not only speed, but volume and sophistication, come into play as well. They are all important and have substantial implications not only for the economy, but for society as a whole.

However, there are still many casualties within the system and part of the reason for that is that information technology has come upon us so quickly. It still remains true, for example, that companies buy hardware before they have considered fully what they want to do with it, and before they have considered their software requirements and intercommunicability, not only within their own company, but with their customers and the companies from which they purchase. Much has been learnt, but the learning curve is expensive.

It is interesting that a survey last year said that the most important priority among British management was upgrading existing systems. I realise that that is partly a reflection of the speed of technology, but regrettably, it is also a reflection of the mistakes made in earlier purchasing decisions. Members of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry will remember in particular the Bank of America, which we visited, where there were substantial errors and the Committee judged that the bank was continuing to make errors in buying information technology systems.

It is interesting that a survey carried out by Amdahl when our report was in its early stages pointed out that attitudes in British management towards information technology lagged behind those in other European countries and especially in West Germany. One of the problems was that we did not spend much time in training our executives in the use of information technology. The survey said:

> "In Great Britain, the least amount of time is spent learning: for example it is believed that only 9 per cent. of British managers 'often' attend internal presentations or seminars on Information Technology, whereas it is 19 per cent. in France, 29 per cent. in Italy and 36 per cent. in West Germany".

That is symptomatic of the problem. The survey also showed that the British position was mixed:

> "Expectations are high and there are some excellent success examples . . . There are some notable exceptions but there is clearly a great deal to do in improving attitudes and understanding if full benefit is to be gained in the years ahead."

There are problems in attitude in British management, which the Government are entitled to say are not wholly their responsibility.

However, I find it odd and the Committee collectively found it offensive that the White Paper was not a counter-statement, but a rather cavalier rebuttal of a serious piece of work which involved a great deal of evidence taken from a wide variety of sources and which made common-sense recommendations. The Government impugned many of the recommendations in a way that did not represent what the Committee had said. What offended me was that the Government criticised us for

points that we did not actually make and rejected recommendations that we did not actually make. That is not a businesslike way in which to go about the matter and was quite unnecessary.

As the hon. Member for Havant has pointed out, there were areas in which the Government were able to say that they were acting positively and as our Chairman, the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren), pointed out in his excellent opening speech, not intervening is, in a sense, an act of intervention. It is a policy decision. The Government are taking a macho ideological position which does not make sense in the day-to-day world in which we all live. Their attitude seems rather unnecessary.

As the Minister will recall, we had a debate on this subject on 19 April. I am pleased to say that the subject was chosen by my own party and the debate was opened by my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), who has direct personal interest in these matters and is an enthusiast for information technology. In particular, he referred to the desirability of having a national broadband fibre-optic cable network. The Government have rejected that and have said that they do not believe that that is especially desirable. They said:

"The Government have no plans to require the creation of a national broadband network based on fibreoptic cable."

Again, the Committee did not suggest that the Government should require the creation of such a network. The Committee said that it thought that that would be desirable, and that it was interested to know whether the Government agreed and whether they felt that they would have an input into that network. I must ask the Minister whether the Government believe, just as neutral observers and operators in the game, that a broadband network is desirable. If they do not, the Minister should tell us why. If they do, what contribution are they prepared to make towards securing it? Nobody is suggesting that the Government should require that network or that they should make it happen, but they should say whether they think that it is desirable.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): What would the hon. Gentleman do?

Mr. Bruce: The Committee is asking the Government to say whether they agree, and if so, what they propose to do. Hon. Members of all parties agreed that a broadband network would be desirable. If the Government do not agree with that, the House should know. Equally, we should know what the Government consider to be the way forward—*[Interruption.]* The Minister will have the chance to reply, so these are perfectly reasonable questions.

The Government accept responsibility for the road network. We have debates about it and different views are expressed, but the Government accept the responsibility for ensuring that there is a road network and that it is maintained, updated and from time to time extended. The Government also accept responsibility for the national grid, for gas and electricity. Why do the Government not accept the responsibility for a national information technology grid, which should be in exactly the same category because it is the modern equivalent of those other networks?

If the Government's argument is that they do not have a role to play, either as a participant in the market or as a gentle guider of the market, they cannot point to history as showing that the market has always got it entirely right. Most people would acknowledge that although the building of the railways was a wonderful achievement, the private companies involved built a lot of lines in silly places, with gauges that did not match. Many of those lines did not pay and ultimately had to be closed, yet the Government could have had a logical and useful role in standardising the gauge. It seems extraordinary that the Government cannot state the desirability of them making similar contributions in this area.

As has already been said, the Government are substantial operators in the market place, as purchasers and users of information technology. I believe that the correct figure for Government expenditure is £1·8 billion per annum, which is about 20 per cent. of the total market. That is no mean and insignificant sum.

When the Committee visited silicon valley we saw considerable evidence that that was substantially a private venture and an offshoot of the injection of Government defence spending. The Committee is not suggesting that that is what we should be doing. We are simply making the observation that the needs and the huge budget of the American defence industry caused the spin-off of that massive innovative private enterprise explosion in silicon valley. That example proves that the interaction between Government expenditure and private sector growth and development is inescapable and unavoidable. Therefore, for the Government to say that they are not prepared even to consider the implications of what they are doing in terms of its impact on the private sector is both absurd and irresponsible.

It is not fair for the Minister to say that the Committee is implying that there should be detailed scrutiny. There was certainly never any suggestion that Government expenditure should be used to pull through technology. We simply argued that the Government should give some consideration to the impact of their expenditure on the development of the British information technology industry. We said that where the two could coincide, the Government's interest as a user and the industry's interest as a supplier should coincide, to both parties' mutual benefit. Any sensible Government would surely grasp that idea as being practical common sense and something that could be used to everybody's advantage.

I value this debate. Our Chairman gave a full and excellent exposition of the Committee's work. I defer to him as somebody who knows a great deal about the subject and as somebody with a great deal more expertise than myself.

This subject affects everybody. It is crucial to the development of our economy and our society. The Government should not artificially magnify differences, many of which do not exist. They should not belittle the work of the Committee because although the Committee members have broad backs, the sad thing is that ultimately the Government are not belittling the work of the Committee, they are belittling our industry, which worked so hard with the Committee to give a great deal of useful evidence, which I believe has been brought together in a way which is welcome to the industry.

I repeat that the industry would like the Government to respond and to ensure that in 10 or 15 years from now our British information technology industry will be in much better shape than it is now and that the British economy and British society will be much benefited by that fact.

8.24 pm

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): This is an important debate. It was a privilege for hon. Members —sadly few in number—to hear the distinguished speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd), who knows more about the subject than probably any other hon. Member and who has campaigned on these issues for so long. I endorse the gist of his entire speech.

My hon. Friend used the word "depressing" several times. I came to this subject as a total stranger when we began our Committee inquiry. Ministers sit in Whitehall, they are sometimes fairly new in their jobs and are not particularly conscious of the issues, so I stress that, as we as a Committee travelled around and saw the Japanese and American efforts and learned about what our partners in Europe, such as the French, were doing, it was indeed depressing to come back and discover what we are doing.

Hon. Members have used metaphors tonight and have said that information technology is today's equivalent of the railways or the coal industry. I was going to use the example of steam. In so doing, we are searching to indicate the enormous significance of developments in information technology. However, what was not true of the earlier industrial revolutions was the sheer pace of change and the rate of development and progress that there is in this area of information technology. Indeed, that is at the heart of the problem because the continuous and huge cost has conditioned the way in which our rivals throughout the world are handling this issue. Therefore, it is not good enough for Ministers to give the impression that they want to wash their hands of it.

Moreover, it is not good enough for Ministers to say that the Committee proposed solutions which, frankly, we did not. We were simply trying to draw attention to the scale of the problem and to the significance of what was happening elsewhere in the world. We were not saying that there should be an attempt in the words of the White Paper to "impose a 'best' solution." Where on earth did the Government get that from?

In the same paragraph, however, the Government said something that we would endorse. I hope that the Minister will bear in mind my words on this in the light of his words in our previous debate on this subject on 19 April. The White Paper states:

> "Government action can be justified to seek to correct failings in the market mechanism".

That is exactly what we proposed throughout our report and the Government have not denied that fact. Therefore, there was no point in the Minister saying when he replied to that earlier debate:

> "The Select Committee was looking for what the Department sees as a more interventionist approach than the Department of Trade and Industry is prepared to support . . . I regret . . . not modern Government policy."—[*Official Report*, 19 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. 385-6.]

We are entitled to ask, which Government's policy? Not that of the Japanese Government. At the heart of capitalism, they pursue a different policy, as do the American Government. In this, as in so many areas, we are marching out of step.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Has my hon. Friend considered the contracting out by the American Government? When I was at the NASA base the other day, I found that the most interesting thing was that it was run by IBM. Did my hon. Friend understand the effects of what he was looking at in the United States of America?

Dr. Hampson: I shall deal with that in detail in a moment. I was trying to make the point that Ministers are making unfounded accusations about the Committee and that the Government are out of step with what we discovered other Governments were trying to do.

The Minister's sentiments were not even consistent with the Government's own approach. Within three weeks of the publication of the Select Committee's report, the Department of Trade and Industry issued a press notice which said:

> "Government invests £22 million for extra IT research."

I hasten to point out that Ministers had not told us that that was happening. Moreover, the Secretary of State appeared before the Committee for a second time three weeks before a major reorganisation of the handling of information technology in his Department was undertaken, yet we were given no indication that that was about to happen.

The press release to which I have referred is one of several issued by the DTI boasting about what the Department is doing—of an information and engineering advanced technology programme for example, and of £22 million to help electronics to expand the science base of this country. Another press notice is entitled "Semiconductors", and says:

> "The Government announced today . . . £16 million for a national programme of research into high temperature conductivity."

Where is the difference between what the DTI is doing on a large number of fronts and what the Committee proposed? We proposed that such activities should be openly accepted. We should not be hiding our initiatives and efforts, or the fact that we are doing what other Governments are doing, albeit in an ad hoc way. We argued that there should be co-ordination. The IT effort spans an enormous range of activities. It involves the schools and how we get young people to cope and to become involved naturally with information technology. It involves training teachers. We have an appalling record on that; information technology coverage in teacher training programmes is wholly inadequate. It involves the awareness of business men and a whole range of other areas' activities—the Training Agency and its training programme for young people and so on.

We have already acknowledged that a Minister in the Department should be the co-ordinating Minister for inner-city policy. Information technology is enormously significant. Is there not a case for saying that we should have a Minister to try to co-ordinate the Government's efforts? That is what the Committee suggested, but the Government said that it was not part of their thinking on these matters.

When it comes to trying to get orders for British industry, every effort—rightly—is made by the Department and the Prime Minister to win contracts—for example, for bridges in Turkey—and I give them credit for that, but are we really saying that help for the British construction industry is more important than assistance for information technology—both for the benefit of that industry itself and because of its application? We cannot say that. Information technology will not only be our largest, most important industry; it will be the industry on which our future prospects depend most heavily. This is what will determine the competitive cutting edge of a

modern industrial country—the acceptance, use and successful development of information technology. The Government acknowledge that in practice, but not openly.

In Japan, the significance of information technology is all too apparent. When we visited Japan we were given a document issued by the Japan Key Technology Center. It contained the huge headline:

"Reaching Out Toward the 21st Century"—

and that is exactly what we are talking about. The document describes the use of Government funds to help co-operative research. Despite the enormous power of the Japanese information technology companies and the huge scale of their own research, they still draw on Government funds. If more than two companies are prepared to capitalise a research and development company, they can get 70 per cent. of the capital from the Japanese Government.

They can also get loans. This is an interesting idea, to which I draw the Minister's attention. Loans are available for Japanese companies that enter high-tech research. Such loans cover 70 per cent. of the cost of research projects, and the interest and repayment of the loan depend on the success of the project. That is because the risk factor in information technology is enormously high. If the project is successful, the company pays the money back. If the project does not succeed, the payments are less, or the company does not pay at all.

It is not good enough to say, as so many commentators in this country do, "Well, the Japanese have a different culture." Of course they do, but the idea of trying to bring together the power of the private sector with Government help to co-operate in this immensely costly area is not restricted to Japan. In odd ways, we try it here, and that may provide a little help on the edges, but the Select Committee was concerned about the scale of the investment gap.

One finds similar arrangements in operation in the United States—the very heart of capitalism. Why did Congress pass the Joint Development and Research Act in 1984? Because the joint involvement of huge American corporations had been breaking anti-trust laws. Having seen what the Japanese are doing, it was most important for the Americans to encourage similar developments. Congress has enacted proposals giving tax credit relief to companies that are prepared to invest in research projects in universities. In America, we see fundamental research assisted by the Government drawing in private sector investment.

What in any of this does the British Conservative Government disapprove of? Will not the Minister say for once that most of these activities are perfectly within the philosophy and approach of the present Government?

Mr. Forth: No.

Dr. Hampson: I find that extraordinary. I think that it should go on the public record that the Minister has just quite clearly said, "No." That is out of character with what other Ministers are saying and with some of the Department's own programmes.

We cannot ignore the scale of the Japanese and American efforts. Rather than giving a great deal of detail about what the Americans do, let me draw the attention of the House to a book by a man called Kenneth Flamm, called "Targeting the Computer". The book is the result of a research project examining how public procurement policy and investment programmes in Europe and the United States have enhanced the development of computer and information technology. The Europeans have not done things very successfully, as the book shows, but that does not mean that we should not make the effort to do them at all.

The book shows how, in the 1960s, the defence programmes, developed largely for the American air force caused a great breakthrough in high-powered computer work. The role of the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency in the 1970s is central to the book's thesis. Help was given to bright people who had bright ideas in universities in the United States—not specifically for military purposes but because it was thought that the development of technologies such as the Sun workstation would ultimately benefit the military. The Americans were prepared, as a Defence Department effort, to put huge sums of money in, even though there was no immediate or direct benefit. The Americans were funding projects that it would take 15 to 20 years to follow through, and we are seeing the results in the space programme and the like.

Of course the British Government do not have resources on that scale, but it is a matter of philosophy and of our approach. We can do something, just as the French have. The "smart" card is now becoming a practical project. It is cheap enough in terms of unit cost for companies to use in the market. That happened largely because the French Government realised that French companies had something valuable but that the project would be difficult to launch because of the cost. They therefore said that a French man's medical records would henceforth be held on a smart card. That created an enormous market for the private sector to develop. The French Government were not picking winners or telling the private sector to do this or do that. It was an example of a Government entering partnership with private companies, helping to create new markets and helping companies to succeed as far as they could in those markets. That is something with which the British Government, of all Governments, should be concerned.

Even if the Government do not accept the degree of intervention that the Minister might say my remarks imply, they have a role in increasing awareness. The Government constantly talk about awareness in the enterprise initiative. The Committee heard a lot of evidence to the effect that there simply was not enough awareness. We may be having a lot of awareness programmes about Europe. The Government have been spreading knowledge very successfully about the single market. One of the most important factors in helping the country to succeed in the single market will be the adoption of information technology.

We do not have enough targeted programmes under the enterprise initiative for information technology. We do not have enough resources in the teaching company programmes specifically geared to information technology. Let us look at some figures: 41 per cent. of IT managers said that their senior management in this country were not successfully involved with knowledge in IT; the comparative figure for West Germany was 5 per cent.

The Government have a major effort to make to heighten awareness, even if they do not want to pull through the technologies, help create the markets, develop the partnerships and do something further to develop research. They must do something further on research, even though they do a lot already. They already make

[Dr. Hampson]

research grants. I have suggested a different type of loan programme, or, like the American Congress, a tax credit system for companies interested not only in specific developmental work for company use but in pure research.

One immediate issue would be of enormous benefit, Increasingly, the Government have encouraged the private sector to help universities and other institutions of higher education. We have a programme of about £1 million to try to lever another £10 million in gifts or donations to higher education. But there is also VAT on charitable donations from companies. A company such as Hewlett-Packard that has been giving equipment to Leeds university is charged 15 per cent. on the value of the high-tech equipment that it is donating. That is absurd. That is the right and left hands of Government not knowing what each other is doing.

We must somehow co-ordinate the Government's effort. The Treasury must believe that short-term cash figures are nothing compared with long-term investment in this country's future. The pay-off in 20-year-olds being able to use the best equipment from Hewlett-Packard, IBM and so on will be more important than spending £40 million on their grannies getting assistance for medical insurance. If we took the £40 million which we are going to put in to assistance for medical insurance and put it into the programmes that we already have to help companies give more equipment to higher education, it would pay for far more in the longer term.

We are asking whether Britain can win and do its best in Europe and whether we can do the best of which we are capable in the world. The report is trying to tell the Government that Britain must be a winner and that, above everything else, we become a winner through the successful use of information technology. Frankly, the Government must have a more positive response, spend more, be more interventionist and be more prepared to co-ordinate their efforts.

8.41 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) and the other members of his Select Committee on Trade and Industry on producing their report on information technology. I agree with most of the contents of the report. Without doubt, the Select Committee's conclusions are a devastating critique of the Government's policy on an industry which, in the words of the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) is the touchstone of the new industrial revolution. I agree with the Committee's 52 recommendations, but I should have liked to see them go a good deal further.

My one regret is that this debate on an important subject is taking place so late. I should have liked to have a full day's debate, so that the Select Committee's recommendations could be fully explored. I have a great deal of respect for the work of Select Committees. I hope that the Minister has had time to reflect on and repent his rather stupid remarks of 19 April, when he referred to the Select Committee as an

" old-fashioned idea of the gargantuan dinosaur".—*[Official Report,* 19 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. 385.]

I hope that the Minister has read the minutes of the evidence of 26 April, when some of his hon. Friends were particularly offended by his personal reference to them. I hope that he will have the magnanimity to repent and to desist from using such stupid language.

Mr. Forth: I ask the hon. Gentleman to re-read that passage. In any case, the last words of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) were that the Government must be more interventionist. I heard him say that, and it will be on the record. Why should I withdraw my remarks, which the hon. Gentleman misquoted, when at least one of my hon. Friends has justified part of what I was saying?

Mr. Stott: That is a matter for the Minister to take up.

Dr. Hampson: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to correct that? I said that there is no doubt that my hon. Friend the Minister would call my view interventionist. I am talking about nurturing those industries, not intervening and telling them what to do.

Mr. Stott: I hope that we can penetrate the Minister's mind, although I have serious doubts about doing that.

There are three major facets to a debate on information technology. The first is the state of the IT industry, the second is the use of IT by the rest of industry, and the third is the Government's use of IT. I shall concentrate on those three issues.

The Chairman of the Select Committee has already mentioned that we have a huge trade deficit in manufactures, particularly in information technology. I make no excuse for drawing that matter to the attention of the House. Britain's 1988 trade deficit for information technology was £3·9 billion. That was up by 15 per cent. on the year before, and was almost one third of the total deficit in manufactures. In the past four years alone, the deficit in electronic goods, which includes computers, telecommunications and audio equipment, has risen by a staggering 40 per cent.

According to the *Financial Times* a detailed breakdown of the figures shows that the

"United Kingdom does not enjoy any particular areas of strength."

The biggest imbalance was in components, professional equipment and semiconductors, at £1·5 billion. For telecommunications, television and audio it was almost as bad, at £1·4 billion. That is double what it was in the past four years. The only declining part of the deficit from £1·1 billion in 1984 to £1 billion last year was in computer and office machinery, but that was almost entirely due to the assembly operations of United States companies in Britain, such as the one in Scotland—Wang—which is now leaving Britain.

Employment in the United Kingdom electronic and electrical engineering sector has fallen from 752,000 in 1979 to 529,000 in 1989. At the same time there has been, and still is, an increasingly alarming skills shortage. No doubt the Minister will lament that deficit, and claim that all other OECD countries, apart from Japan, suffer trade deficits. That is a fig-leaf that has been claimed by himself and also by his boss, the Secretary of State, in his rather difficult encounter with the Select Committee on 26 April.

In two ways, it is an extraordinary defence. First, apart from the rather special case of telephone equipment, in which we are still seeing the legacy of public procurement policies, both in their role of producing strong companies in Britain and the investment programme of British

Telecom and others, Britain's trade deficit in the other relevant sectors is the largest by far of any comparable countries.

Secondly, and even more extraordinary, Japan's strength is claimed as a defence by a Government who maintain that the type of industrial strategy that is followed by Japan is an abomination against nature. In the words of the sour White Paper that was produced by the Government in response to the report:

"'Strategy' implies attempts to 'pick winners', to ignore market signals or to impose 'best solutions'."

"It cannot work," the Government say, yet strategy is precisely what Japan has and what has continued to contribute to its present dominance in information technology.

Having read about the Secretary of State's encounter with the Select Committee, I remembered that he had a rather bruising encounter with my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) about the definition of the words "strategy" and "policy". The Secretary of State said that the Government had a policy, but, apparently, his departmental officials told the Select Committee that the Government did not have a strategy for the information technology industry. I, and I suspect many others, do not believe that the Government have a policy or a strategy, no matter how those two words are defined. As the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West said, the Government cannot pick winners in the versions of the alternative policies that have been quoted by the Minister. As the Select Committee recognised, only customers that include the public sector can pick winners in the long term.

Government can, however, do much more to ensure that conditions are created in which winners can come through. People look for winners in the first place. In the words of the Electronics Components Industry Federation, when giving evidence to the Select Committee, market forces cannot be relied on. The Government's fear of committing themselves in any argument about the future is similar to the man who will not leave home for fear of being run over and who spends his time compiling long lists of all those who have been run over in the past.

Japanese industrial strategy has led to some mistakes, of course, but the Minister would feel much more comfortable tonight if he could claim Japanese IT success. Japan is not the only country to believe in the I-word, "intervention". The French-Italian state-owned company SGS Thomson could not believe its luck when it was allowed to purchase INMOS, the developer of the world-beating, leading edge transputer, just as it was moving into profit after the characteristically long lead time following the initial investment in hightech.

The Conservatives never liked INMOS because it was established by the last Labour Government and was in the public sector. I find telling the response of Pasquale Pistorio, the boss of SGS Thomson, when asked how he would feel if he were British and saw such a unique company pass into foreign hands. "I do not know," he said, "I am not British." At one level that was, I suppose, a diplomatic answer, but at another it was extremely revealing. It could happen only in Britain. This is the only country in the world that would sell something as valuable as INMOS to a foreign competitor.

There has been no lack of warning about the parlous state of the British IT sector. The NEDC warned in 1984 that Britain was approaching a precipice. In 1986, the Information Technology Advisory Panel called for a more energetic and strategic approach. The Advisory Council for Applied Research and Development, the Cabinet advisory body, and the report to the Department of Trade and Industry from Coopers and Lybrand both called for action. Perhaps the most damning of all was the MacKinsey report into the British electronics industry which pointed a gloomy picture post-1992.

The Government have not failed to heed just the warnings. They have done all they can to make the situation worse. They abolished the IT little Noddy and they abolished the post of Minister for Information Technology and gave us instead the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs. We always understood that his role in the Conservative party was to stand next to his right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbitt), thus making him appear civilised. The Prime Minister should never have visited upon the Minister who will reply tonight the supposed mantle of Minister for Information Technology, considering that this is one of the most important areas in British industrial activity.

One bright spot in the activities of the Government was the Alvey programme, but that is now almost entirely wound down. The proposals of the Bide committee, for the relatively modest sum of a £125 million follow-on, has been totally rejected by the Government, as the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye pointed out.

Yesterday I spoke to Lord Gregson, who was a member of the Bide committee, who told me that that committee has worked for two years to produce its report and that the Government had done nothing about its recommendations. The tragedy is that that seems to be indicative of the attitude of the Government towards the IT industry.

The Government are winding up their support for such strategic projects as fibre-optics and opto-electronics, as well as the micro-electronics industry support programme and software products scheme. They have made it clear that there is to be no significant support for the large-scale integrated microchip, the exact opposite of what is happening in the United States and Japan. Within a few weeks of the Government making that announcement, the American Government announced a $250 million support programme for collaborative research by United States companies into VLSI technology. Therein lies the real difference.

We welcome the ESPRIT, RACE, BRITE and other EC-wide research programmes and we want to see those extended and developed. Although Britain's performance is poor, we must catch up with the rest of our European competitors. Part of the problem, and therefore part of the solution, must be to tackle Europe's general backwardness compared with the United States and Japan. Part of that must be a European-led position on the setting of standards.

We welcome the new DTI push for OSI, even if it is too little, too late. We also think there could be more effort in ensuring that the public sector used OSI equipment. That is an example of the kind of interventionist public procurement policy that can work.

But although European collaboration is an important part of the way forward, it cannot be a substitute for British Government action. A strong research base in Britian is a prerequisite to participation in collaborative EC research programmes. ESPRIT 2 was massively over-subscribed and we cannot pretend that it is a substitute for our own efforts.

[Mr. Stott]

Insufficient research and development is not the only problem holding back Britain. Despite insufficient funding by industry and a lack of resources in the universities, there are still major technological breakthroughs and exciting discoveries made in Britain. Some are brought to the market, and we wish them well. Some are even brought to the market by British firms.

There are three factors underlying the failure of British IT to grow in the way that it has grown in other countries. First, British firms have been handicapped in terms of access to funds. There is now a well-researched funding gap for start-up companies, which applies particularly to ventures operating at the inevitably high risk, long-term payback, leading edge of technology. Many of the world's newest large and medium IT companies started out in Californian garages. British garages have been much less productive. I suspect that that has more to do with the availability of funds to take the development on to the next stage than to any inherent superiority on the part of Californian garages.

Secondly, we have the general structural problems common to all aspects of British manufacturing industry. I will spare the House a lecture tonight on high interest rates, but our easy market for corporate control and the City-induced emphasis on short-term profits has been particularly damaging to the IT industry. The great struggle between GEC and Plessey provides some important lessons.

GEC is in a position to make the bid because of its extraordinary cash mountain. It has run up that cash mountain because it has failed to make new investments, and high interest rates allow it to make a significant return. As the *Financial Times* has commented:

"GEC has no great reputation as an innovator in non-defence electronics. One of the most striking facts to emerge from the MMC report is that Siemens spends three times as much on research as GEC."

GEC no doubt also sees an advantage in building up that cash mountain as a defence against other creditors. GEC has always been profitable, but it has not grown in the same way as other European companies.

Dr. Hampson: As far as I can remember off the top of my head, that is a little unfair. Siemens is so much bigger as a company than GEC. Siemens is worth £14 billion to £15 billion, whereas GEC is worth £3 billion to £4 billion. I believe that GEC's latest account shows that it has been spending about 7 per cent. on research, which is higher than Siemens.

Mr. Stott: The hon. Gentleman may or may not be right, but my point was related to the bid for Plessey. Although GEC has had so much money generated, it has not spent that money on increasing its research and development—which I believe it should have done—in the same way as other European companies.

GEC has always been profitable but it has not grown like other European companies. Between 1982 and 1987, GEC declined by 27 per cent. in value. Siemens, on the other hand, grew by 70 per cent., AEG, another German company, grew by almost 500 per cent., ASEA Brown Boveri, the Swiss-Swedish firm, grew by almost 250 per cent. and Philips by 36 per cent. As GEC is one of our biggest firms, we are entitled to feel disappointed by those statistics. However, the City will be impressed by the statistics that they value—profits per employee are almost twice those of any of the other big European electronics companies. The Opposition do not object to profits, but we believe that they should be invested in new products and markets and, especially, in research and development.

There is even less excuse for GEC than any of the other companies because so much of its profit—like Plessey—is made from the taxpayer. GEC and Plessey are two of the six companies which were paid more than £250 million by the Ministry of Defence last year. Both companies—I should exempt Plessey because it has attempted to break away from that syndrome—have preferred the safe yet slow growth markets of defence contracting and other public sector supply contracts to the more risky but higher growth consumer side. Our large electronic companies need a more adventurous and risk-taking attitude and greater market orientation. I hate to think how much time, money and effort have gone into this bid, for no apparent reason. Once again, resources have been drained from the productive sector to profit the financial sector, where all those who make such a good living from the takeover market have made yet another killing.

The third ingredient in Britain's IT industry is the I-word, Government intervention. I am not talking about centralised planning or DTI meddling in the day-to-day operations of individual firms, but about the kind of approach provided by MITI in Japan and the Department of Defence and NASA in the United States, where public procurement is done in a way that maximises spin-off rather than Britain's overly secretive approach.

I was interested to read the comments of the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West, when he was cross-examining the Secretary of State. He said:

"Who are the big buyers in the market? The big buyers, there, are the Government: MINITEL in France, NASA in the United States. From what you are saying, it may be the success of different companies, but it is the use of Government purchasing power that leads to that success."

The Secretary of State then said:

"What has MINITEL led on to?"

If I recall, the hon. Gentleman then rounded on the Secretary of State and said:

"Thousands of small companies have been founded in France on the back of MINITEL. Have your Department checked it out? What I want to know is, have you even bothered to find out? Do civil servants in this country even bother to look to find out what is happening elsewhere."

The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West said that, because, if I recall, he was pretty steamed up. He was right.

A good example of such an approach for Britain would be the introduction of broadband fibre-optics in the communications network, as the Select Committee has recognised. It is an area of technology in which Britain leads the world, both in the strength of the basic science research base and in the application of applied technology, particularly by British Telecom. Such a network would not require huge Government expenditure, bar some initial pump-priming and a commitment to use the network for purposes such as education and training.

By making a commitment to such a network, the Government will ensure that the private sector can make the investment in the new technology and in the new capacity that will be required. Other countries will want to buy the expertise and technology that we develop. As has been said time and time again tonight, this is a rare opportunity to develop a common European approach, through standards setting and by collaboratively funded research in which Britain's industry can set the pace.

Broadband cable is the infrastructure of tomorrow. It is the river by which information can flow and the Government should begin to respond to that proposition properly instead of trotting out the conclusions of the Macdonald report.

I recognise that time is moving on and that other hon. Members would like to participate in the debate. I do not believe, however, that the Select Committee has addressed the matter of high-definition television. The House will be aware that the standard for high-definition television will be a European one. To take advantage of that exciting new technology we must learn some lessons from the past. Television set production in this country has all but disappeared and frankly the Government have just sat back and let that happen. To prevent a further worsening of our balance of payments the Government should be working on—let us use the word that the Minister does not like—a strategy to assist and advise British companies so that we can meet the challenge adequately and play a strong role in Europe. Failure to do so by leaving it entirely to market forces will mean another wasted opportunity and another loss for Britain.

There are a number of questions that I would like to ask the Minister, but I shall confine myself to two matters. What will happen after Alvey 2? How will the long-term research be funded? Does the Government believe that the United Kingdom has a chance to participate seriously in the artificial intelligence expert systems markets of the 1990s and beyond? What is the Government's position on COCOM, given that other European countries are making major strides in selling information technolpgy products and telecommunications equipment to the Eastern bloc? What will the United Kingdom Government do to protect our firms that are penalised by the codes of COCOM?

Over the past few years, the Government have been inundated with reports and advice from many learned quarters, the latest of which is the Select Committee's report. If they fail to respond positively to the advice given to them by the Select Committee and by industry and if they fail to respond to the plethora of advice that they have received in the past, they will stand guilty of abandoning the touchatone of the new industrial revolution.

9.7 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I congratulate the Select Committee and its Chairman on the report, although I do not agree with everything in it. It is rather like the curate's egg—good in parts.

I welcome the opportunity, however, to debate information technology as it is the rope on which our manufacturing industry and commercial activities hang. Coupled with that are the effects of information technology on our balance of payments, whether that means benefits to it or a downside negative. At the moment our balance of payments is negative.

It is a strange fact that, for some reason or other, this country has less investment in manufacturing industry, research and training than any of our international competitors. Why that is so could be the subject of a long, detailed debate, but I do not intend to examine every reason tonight. I know that I tend to sound like a well-worn record as I keep on producing the facts again and again, but I shall continue to do so until something is done to put the situation right or I am proved wrong. Obviously, from a national point of view, I hope that I am proved wrong.

There have been some significant improvements in our manufacturing investment over the past few years. However, those investments are only now level with those of 1979. In percentage terms against their gross national product, the Japanese invest 50 per cent. more than all the other industrialised nations. We are the lowest of the G7 countries when it comes to investment. That is on the negative side, but on the positive side, we must congratulate the Government on the work that they have done on inward investment, and the way in which they have brought companies' and countries' activities into this country. They have been so successful that even the French, that most chauvinistic of nations, have seen where they have gone wrong and seek to emulate us.

I do not know whether the present levels of manufacturing and inward investment are sufficient to produce, in time, an acceptable level of trade balance without, as may shortly happen, demand being beaten down by the single club of high interest rates. My hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) clearly described the size of the problem when he said that, to overcome the present negative balance of trade, this country will have to produce and sell six more Metros every minute.

However, that is enough of the general gallop around the park of my particular prejudices. I shall return to the information technology report and the Government's response. I have some sympathy with the Government over the dilemma that they face. First, they do not want to try to pick winners. I have to smile and welcome the conversion of the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) who said that he, too, was apprehensive about any Government's ability to pick winners. His is another of the road to Damascus conversions which are taking place among the Labour party and its policies. If the hon. Gentleman is not careful, the Labour party and the Conservative party will become indistinguishable. I have no doubt that differences will be forthcoming at the next election.

Mr. Crowther: I am extremely obliged. Will the hon. Gentleman tell us to which Conservative party he has just referred: the Government or Conservative Members on the Select Committee?

Mr. Page: When it comes to splits in parties, nobody can beat the Labour party, in which the spectrum of political prejudices is so wide that it has gone round in a complete circle. I apologise for stirring up this minor controversy and I shall return to the other horn of the dilemma. If we did not have fun in these debates it would be time we all went home. However, if the House will quieten down, I shall return to the other horn of the dilemma. There are so few of us here this evening that I hardly think these are grounds for a riot.

The Government must also ensure that there is sufficient national progress to combat and defeat international competition, which exists outside the EC. Later, I shall talk about how we must work within the EC to achieve the success which we all want.

The Government's example is not one of the best. I am a member of the Public Accounts Committee and we have in front of us a series of reports from the National Audit

[Mr. Page]

Office referring to the effectiveness of Government Departments in introducing information technology and computers into their daily operations. It would be invidious of me to go through the reports because they make sad and serious reading. The delay in introducing computerisation into Departments is nothing short of a scandal, with one bright exception: the Inland Revenue. That Department has taken significant steps to introduce computerisation and information technology into its operations. I say that from the bottom of my heart, not because I sent my income tax form in this morning.

We face a dilemma. The Government spend more of total funds on research and development in information technology than do our industrial competitors; on the other hand, our industrial manufacturers contribute far less. The Government must be congratulated on helping to bridge the huge divide between academia and industry by setting up the Alvey programme—£350 million, which has gone into some positive projects. That is a memorable step towards reducing the huge gap and towards achieving what is regarded as standard by almost every other industrial country.

I have offered credit and congratulations, but I am disappointed to read in the report that the Alvey project will not be evaluated until the 1990s. We must build our future on the success or failure of that project, so we need information about it. Paragraph 17 of the report states that we have not taken commercial advantage of the work done on these projects. That is a crying shame and it illustrates one of the weaknesses in our industrial structure.

The baton has been taken up by ESPRIT. I am glad to see that more small and medium-sized businesses are involved in that.

I support the Committee's recommendation that more tax aids be given to the smaller companies to enable them to improve and compete. As the House knows, I am a firm supporter of smaller businesses. They have the flexibility and ingenuity to get projects under way while big companies are still bending down to put their boots on.

Against that background we must examine what the competition, particularly the Japanese, are doing. The report quotes the Japanese as saying that their information technology industry will be worth £600 billion by the year 2000—for a huge market which the Japanese are targeting for themselves.

What part can we make IT play in the overall game of national economic success and in redressing the negative balance of trade? There is a growing realisation in the United States that if it adheres to its present course in IT it will soon lose out to the Japanese. United States leadership in this field is under severe pressure. Its lead in specialised chips, super-computers and software is being whittled away. My hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) gave us a devastating and sorry list of the advances being made by the Japanese. Their success has made the Americans aware of the vital necessity of having a large manufacturing base. It has exploded the myth of the 1970s that America could become more prosperous as a service-based economy.

We can learn from these experiences. Only as part of Europe can we stem the tide and start to catch up. Europe is caught in the crossfire between the Japanese and the Americans, as they shoot it out at the OK Corral. Only by skilful use of the sheer market size of the EEC can we ensure a revival.

Europe used to show a surplus on information technology; now it shows a deficit. I could list the areas in which we are losing out, but I shall mention only one—the ability to write software. We used to lead the world in this skill, but we are steadily losing our leadership. We shall redress the balance only with the co-operation of all people, all Governments and all industries within the EEC. The official EEC efforts to revitalise high technology on a national framework have been based so far on ESPRIT, RACE and EUREKA. These have been worthy efforts in bringing companies and academic institutions together. The Government are to be congratulated on laying that foundation, and from that flows the recommendations of the Select Committee. Recommendation No. 21, reads:

"the Government should plan now to avoid any hiatus in academic research in IT when both the national IT programme and Esprit 2 come to an end."

Simultaneously and in step with that must be the next move, that of international co-operation within the EEC for the introduction of pan-European initiatives away from the protection of small and national champions that operate in a fragmented market. There must be a move towards a larger operation in a larger market. Time is not on our side, but I suggest that what I have said offers the best chance of success of survival for British-based industries in the IT world.

9.21 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Like everyone else who has contributed to the debate, I welcome the report. I support the recommendations and I agree with all that has been said by the advocates of faster progress.

I wish to take the argument one stage further. The hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) made some interesting remarks when he compared information and money. He said that people know broadly how to use money nowadays but they do not say that we can do without the Chancellor of the Exchequer, although to do so would be an attractive thought. The Chancellor does not spend his time telling people that they should use money rather than gold, or beads, or barter. Instead, he is concerned with who does what with money, tax, expenditure, expenditure on what, savings, savings by whom, investment in what and investment for what. As information technology matures, it should be concerned with the use that is made of information rather than the methods by which that use is made. All computer companies nowadays are advertising for sale solutions and not techniques.

The origins of these matters go back far beyond the recollection or reminiscences of the hon. Member for Havant. Before the 1964 general election, I chaired a committee on the uses of information from a more mature information technology industry. One member of the committee was Professor Richard Stone, who was personal assistant to Keynes and a Nobel prize winner. Another member was Teddy Jackson, the director of economics and statistics at Oxford, who rendered Harold Wilson, as he then was, a great service in coming second to him in PPE at Oxford as an undergraduate. We put together the rationalisation of business statistics which led to the common register of business interests, the setting up of the business statistics office and other developments.

I shall mention two areas in which the Government are suffering because they are not taking the initiative. I am, of course, in favour of the broadband fibre-optic network, but for what? We must face the fact that the PA Consulting Group's technology report, the Zegfel report on the Netherlands and other papers all reach the conclusion that there is not a market for switched broadband in the foreseeable future. There was, however, a caveat in the PA Consulting Group's technology report. It stated that education and training was a potential application area but that the education sector had no money to spend nowadays and that it was not a potential customer. That may be true under this Government, but is it true in terms of the needs of the education system? I am speaking not in terms of the potential of information technology but of needs, efficient ways of raising standards in schools, the introduction of the national curriculum, and so on.

I think that the answer to the question is probably yes. Interactive video and broadband access to the best teachers in the country, so that teachers in the classroom can call them up and use their material as needed, is probably the most effective way of raising education standards, in conjunction with many other developments in education. Those methods need to be developed; the curriculum material needs to be developed. It is an expensive business.

The PA Consulting Group estimates that software development is 10 times as expensive as hardware. The software needs a long lead time in its development. It is no good producing hardware and then trying to develop the software for it, because it will be 10 years before that software is available to exploit the hardware potential. The software must be developed at a stage when the technology is still too expensive to use for its future application. The £6,000 interactive video machine may be far too expensive to use in classrooms generally, even if it is only one for the teacher, but it is essential for the development of the educational methods that will come into use in five, seven or 10 years time, through cheaper machines and on broadband. It is the most efficient way to develop and research the curriculum material, test it in the field, and train people in its use.

We need to go on from there. The work of the Open university needs to be properly organised and integrated with such projects as the medical work at Bristol university, the engineering departmental links within London university, Salford and other initiatives. A number of operations are being carried out but they are grossly under-funded. There is no leadership from the Government or from the Secretary of State for Education and Science—the once so-called Minister for Information Technology.

The personal computer revolution should be the model for the development of broadband applications. It is a new medium that people must learn how to use, just as they learned to use personal computers by watching their children playing computer games at home. The computers began to go into the schools and the parents wanted to buy them because they thought that they would provide opportunities for the future. If there is good curriculum material in the schools, everyone will also want it in his or her home. Every parent will want it for his child. There will be a willingness to spend the £400 to £800 per household needed for each new wave of consumer electronics, which introduces the new systems.

By their neglect of information technology, the Government are also damaging the processes of government. If anyone wants to empty the House, to drive out the Members, he should talk about information technology. If he wanted to drive out even those few Members present tonight, he need only talk about Government statistics. The report on Government economic statistics reveals an outrageous neglect, mostly by the Department of Trade and Industry, but also by the Treasury. There is a discrepancy in the national accounts between the records of income and expenditure of £14 billion—3·5 per cent. of national income. The books do not add up.

The discrepancy is bigger than the trade gap. It is the stuff on which elections are won or lost, yet the Government are in the dark. They propose only some patchwork improvements to the individual statistical series and so on. The damage was done by Rayner, who missed the point that the biggest users of business information are the businesses themselves; the Government are but bystanders and watchers abstractors of a tiny part of the information flow that runs in great tides throughout the economy. A modern information system for the economy needs to be based primarily on the uses made by business of its own information.

The system needs to be organised. There needs to be set standards of disclosure, of publication and of access similar to those that are set in the accounting profession. The profit and loss accounts, double entry bookkeeping and so on were invented by the Venetian traders in the middle ages. If the Government do not create the standards and systems, business cannot communicate with itself.

Practical steps must be taken. The Government must realise that there needs to be an open system, and that system should be brought into the electronic age. It should be based on the requirement of companies to maintain their databases on-line on personal computers or floppy disks. There must be the appropriate security checks so that the right people have the right access at different levels.

It might be a paradise for the hacker to begin with, until the hacker discovers that he can have more fun and make more money by collating the information that people want rather than by concentrating on what he believes to be hypersensitive information that is being kept from people. The data are then available on a consistent basis between the historical record and the projection into the future. It is not Government who build the models, it is the investment analysts, the shareholders, the takeover bidders, the employees, the customers, the suppliers, who, from this system can build up a comprehensive picture of how the economy works, how business works and how their prospects will develop.

The proper posture of information technology is not as a supplicant, not as a master, but as an articulate and powerful servant.

9.29 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I welcome the opportunity to follow such a distinguished speaker as the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray).

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

I cannot agree with the report. I urge the House to reject it and to adopt in its stead the excellent White Paper put forward by my noble Friend the Secretary of State.

Had it not been for the acidic and arctic exchanges between the Secretary of State and the Select Committee, I would have felt able to draw conclusions as he did, empirically, from the report as it stands. However, I cannot, because when one draws conclusions from this report, one is accused of not having read it. The Minister himself was accused of not having read the report before his statement on 19 April when he talked about dinosaur tendencies. If being a dinosaur is an ability to respond effectively to change, the Select Committee in its report has demonstrated that quality.

I must add here, with my respect for the individual members of the Committee, that the Committee's report does not reflect the high intelligence that is undoubtedly shared by all its members. I have sought long and hard for new ideas in the report, but I can find not one.

Let me draw the Committee's attention to three crucial paragraphs where the report fails and where its failure is shown most clearly. Those are the last three paragraphs, Nos. 114, 115 and 116.

I have to read the report because one has to be a fundamentalist when dealing with it. One must read the exact words; one cannot draw conclusions. Paragraph 14 says:

"There is no doubt that the government no longer attaches a high priority to IT as a frontier technology needing sponsorship."

I submit that that statement is made as a reflection of ill-considered thinking by the Government, and yet it is exactly the stance that the Government should adopt. A frontier technology? How could IT be a frontier technology? IBM started in the United Kingdom in 1954. I started work in ICL in 1961. IT is most surely not a frontier technology needing sponsorship.

The report goes on:

"Whatever the effect of this on the future of the IT industry it does not fit in well with the objective of promoting the use of IT in the economy."

Of course it does, because frontier technology it is not and it most certainly does not need sponsorship.

The report goes on:

"We recommend that IT matters should be dealt with at Minister of State level in the DTI."

It then says that the Government

"shows no signs of formulating a total policy for the industry",

and that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry should

"be made responsible for all aspects of Government policy on information technology and should produce an annual report on its implementation."

Old-fashioned thinking indeed.

But that thinking, particularly the last statement, is based on a complete misapprehension. The misapprehension is identified clearly in the evidence on Wednesday 26 April which we can read at paragraph 1145. That says that the Committee felt that

"a Minister should be responsible for IT (as would be the case in every large organisation and enterprise in this country) at the Cabinet table."

That is completely incorrect. Not all boards have an IT director. Nor do most boards have a director who has a specific responsibility for IT in his portfolio. For the most part, IT is included in the finance director's responsibilities, and only to a limited extent.

Industry thrives and creativity wells best from the bottom up and not, through imposition in the IT industry, from the top down. A rigidity of thinking runs right through the report, not just as a thread but as an iron rod which reflects dinosaurial thinking and points to an early death for the report.

Let us look for a moment at the size and scale of the industry and on the Government's part and the way in which they have computerised so massively. No other speaker has touched on that. The British software industry alone is currently one of the country's great success stories, but almost everyone has overlooked that. It is growing at a rate of 25 per cent. per annum. What other industry in Britain unhampered by Government intervention is doing that? Hardware sales have been dropping annually. It is also worth remembering that computers currently hold 2 per cent. of all human knowledge.

The Government have not held back from computerisation or from holding more human knowledge on computers. I refer to the Ministry of Defence's CHOTS endeavour using 75,000 terminals, which the Select Committee did not know about, and which will be implemented in September. Within three years, the Inland Revenue will be using 40,000 desktop computers addressing 20 different databases. Twenty million Department of Social Security records are currently being computerised. They will be on line and in daily use, and that will mean any number of word processors on people's desks.

There has also been enormous investment in computerising hospital records, which, God and the suppliers willing, will be completed by 1991. That is perhaps the largest and most interventionist exercise of all, and the one which will have most impact on everyone in the country, because all of us are concerned about our own health. The Department of Trade and Industry is busy putting company knowledge and advice on computers.

No member of the Select Committee has mentioned the tremendous departmental shift to computerisation, whereby the Government are changing from the old system of handing down budgetary control through votes, which we presumably inherited from the 1600s, to the modern system of budgetary control with its concomitant partner—the management information system. In academia there is JANET—a computerised network information which serves all our universities, which also have their own excellent departments of computer science. In addition, the Government are buying in through contracting out—and if that is not a way of supporting British industry, what is?

TAURUS—computerisation of share registers throughout the country—is embedded in the Companies Bill. There is computerisation in industry, and among individuals in the form of bulletin boards. The tiny amateur network of the British Association of Computer Clubs alone has a network of 20,000 members.

The report does not address some of the real problems. It overlooks what is happening and tinkers instead with old-fashioned thinking and with things that have been and gone. It does not consider properly the question of staffing. Of course there is a tremendous shortage of programmers, and perhaps that is one reason why there is more software intervention and why more self-created software is being

developed with ADA, which will mean that fewer human beings will be needed. I have already mentioned the crucial importance of women and of middle-aged men in IT and of the lessening need for young people because computing is no longer the skilled and sophisticated profession that it was when I first joined the industry.

I draw the attention of the House to another part of the Select Committee's report. I shall not pull through the technology, but I shall pull through some of the report's very old-fashioned thinking, to arrive at a fraction of modern thought. Paragraph 51 contains a clear criticism of universities and the Government for not tempting the brightest

"to undertake higher education in the appropriate disciplines."

The really interesting thing about IT is that all its disciplines are eminently suitable for all graduates entering the computer industry. BP, for example, takes graduates from all the disciplines within any university framework, ranging from zoology backwards.

The report does not address the key British weakness, which has nothing to do with training , lack of intellectual creativity, or lack of funds. It is the huge, built-in weakness of lack of marketing ability. That is the single largest factor in inhibiting computer development in Britain, and it always has been. The Select Committee's report does not attract attention to computer misuse, which accounts for one fifth of the computer investment—continuing, capital and recurring—in any computer installation. The report does not address the key issue of standards, which must be the thrust of computer usage.

The Government's role in computer and high-technology matters should be minimalist. They are a major user of a high standard. The White Paper is not "sour", as was said earlier, but sane and sensible, giving a framework for growth within which United Kingdom-based IT will flourish. The Select Committee report should be discarded and rapidly buried. I suggest to members of the Select Committee, "Hands off information technology. You are well meaning, but astigmatic interference will throttle it to death."

9.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): This has been a fascinating and informative debate, which is not something that one can say about every debate. The hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) gave the game away. Indeed, several cats leaped out of bags this evening. Early in the debate, the hon. Gentleman stressed that the report had been unanimous. He went on to give us, as he was entitled to do, a traditional Labour party approach that laid great stress on what I make no apology for calling good, old-fashioned interventionism.

The key to the debate and to understanding the difference of opinion between the Government and the Select Committee is in what the hon. Member for Rotherham said about the unanimity of the report. In his evidence to the Committee, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Lord Young, said:

"I believe there is an honest difference of opinion between us".

Let us not try to hide that fact. From time to time, Select Committees produce texts that attract unanimous support from all parties on those Committees, and they should not be surprised if the Government are not able to accept their recommendations. That is almost axiomatic and self-evident. I am surprised that members of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry are surprised that there should have been this difference of view between the Select Committee and the Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) gave the game away totally in his typically honest way and with his typically honest candour when, at the end of his excellent speech—I made a note of his words and will check them in *Hansard* tomorrow—he said that the Government must "be more interventionist." That is clear, open and on the record. The hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) recognises that. This is a major reason for the difference between the Select Committee and the Government.

Mr. Stott: They got it right.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman says that they—the Select Committee—have got it right, meaning, I suppose, that we, the Government, have got it wrong. The hon. Gentleman could not have put it better.

Dr. Hampson: I was being ironic about my hon. Friend's use of the word "intervention". The Government cannot have a "hands off" approach. They must nurture, as do every other major Government in Europe, the United States and elsewhere. We are not proposing dinosaur thinking. My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) and my hon Friend the Minister seem to be somewhat ideological.

Mr. Forth: If I have time, I shall return to the point about what other countries do. We must be a little careful. Many hon. Members have been seduced into seeing what they have thought are attractive elements in other countries' policies, taking the bits that they like. Contributors to the debate have spoken favourably about Japan, the United States and even other European countries. They have suggested that all we have to do is to adopt the good bits, the nice bits or the bits that seem to work well, and all will be well. If I have the time, I shall refute that argument. I do not find it attractive or convincing.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State spent a long time with the Committee. I do not know whether it was a meeting of minds. At one point in his excellent speech, he said:

"I believe Government, and I have said so already, has a very real role to set the climate, to set standards, but that the particular technology is not the responsibility of the Government to actually choose and select."

My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State put his approach in his usual succinct and elegant way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren), the Chairman of the Select Committee, made an excellent opening speech. He showed, as always, why a Select Committee is prepared to follow his leadership and to unanimously back his reports. From the nature and tone of his speech, I can understand why that should be so, even though there may be differences between us. It is important to put the record straight immediately on one of his points. My hon. Friend quoted an article in the *Financial Times*. I want to make it clear that there is no Department of Trade and Industry and Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency initiative as he suggested. I understand from the CCTA that it could, if requested, meet the firms to clarify aspects of particular

[Mr. Forth]

contracts, but in that case, all information and all contracts would be available to all bidders. Each bid for Government contracts is considered on its merits and bids by United Kingdom consortia are not given preference over others.

I wanted to make that point clear because several hon. Members have suggested that in some way, either openly or surreptitiously, we could use Government procurement policy to favour British suppliers. Members of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry above all should know that that is not allowed within the European Community. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West sought to draw a parallel with bridges in Turkey. One cannot compare the Government's support for civil engineering contractors building bridges in Turkey with the public procurement policy of information technology within the European Community. The parallel is faulty in so many ways that it is difficult to know where to start.

Mr. Wood: This is an interesting point. A number of individuals and companies are concerned that although this country operates correctly with regard to EC policy, other Governments may not take such a pure view. Are the Government taking action to prevent those countries abusing the system?

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that important point. The answer must be that if there are members of the European Community who are breaking its rules, flagrantly or otherwise, we should not break them in the same way, but should encourage the Commission to discharge its responsibilities in ensuring that all member states obey the rules equally. Let us not become rule breakers, but let us rather urge the Commission to do the task with which it is charged and responsible—to create the level playing field we all want. I hope that my hon. Friend agrees.

I want to give the House some idea of the extent of the Department's useful, productive and correct support for information technology. We give support for consultancy, for example, under the financial and information systems initiative and 2,250 such projects were approved in the first 14 months of the initiative. There are three major programmes for information technology transfer and information standards involving about £41 million of spend over three years. We support the introduction of new technology into schools. There is a £6 million programme and the Department of Education and Science also provides support under its schools initiative. There is support for information technology research and development under the Department of Trade and Industry and Science and Engineering Research Council joint framework for information technology, including the United Kingdom's contribution to the European programmes and that will total over £100 million of publicly funded support for information technology research and development this year.

In that context, and in answer to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye and by the hon. Member for Wigan about the Bide committee, which recommended funding of £300 million in collaborative research and £125 million in the programme on application over the next five years, the Government are spending at least as much as that in collaborative research and development, taking into account spend through the European programmes. The Bide application programme was rejected because we believe—we have a consistent view about this right across the board, not just in relation to information technology—that near-market research and product development is best carried out by industry, and not by the Government using public funds.

The hon. Member for Wigan referred to INMOS. It is true that industry in the United Kingdom had every opportunity to acquire INMOS when it became available, but the truth was—it may well be a sad truth—that no United Kingdom electronics company was prepared to take INMOS on. The fact that a company from another European Community country chose to do so may say something about its judgment, rather than about that of United Kingdom companies.

I now turn briefly to high-definition television, to which the hon. Member for Wigan also referred. The Government are providing support for that product. We are supporting the work to establish a European standard for the system. Work is being undertaken under EUREKA, and United Kingdom firms are involved in that project. The Department of Trade and Industry is providing support for the necessary service and development. That is something that has been identified and to which measured support under the research and development heading is being given.

Several hon. Members have referred to the IT trade deficit. Much concern has been expressed about that and, of course, the Government are concerned, just as they would about any trade deficit in a country which depends on trade more than any other country. However, there has been a trade deficit in this area for many years. Indeed, there was an IT trade deficit in 1978, in the last year of the Labour Government. Obviously, this is a long-standing problem.

As the hon. Member for Wigan admitted, it is a problem that the other major European countries also face. The Federal Republic of Germany, France and Italy all have trade deficits in computers and communication equipment. In 1987, the United States moved into deficit in this area. Therefore, of all the OECD countries, only Japan has a trade surplus in this area. It should not be forgotten that the United Kingdom has a trade surplus with the rest of the European Community—of over £500 million in 1987. We should not paint too gloomy a picture, because we can point to success.

In her excellent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) gave the House some good news and an upbeat picture rather than the doom and gloom that was presented by most hon. Members. We must strike a balance in these matters. We must acknowledge the problems, but also fully acknowledge the success stories. I thank my hon. Friend for doing that and regret that she was the only hon. Member to take such an approach.

I turn now to the fibre-optic network, with which so many hon. Members are obsessed, besotted or dazzled—I do not know which word to use about it. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) challenged me to give the Government's view on this, and I do so with pleasure. The Government have listened carefully on many occasions to the arguments in favour of promoting a broad band national grid. We have taken into account the views and the many reports that have been made on this subject. We keep a close eye on developments abroad.

No one doubts the potential benefits that can be offered by modern telecommunications, or that fibre-optic applications will be important. British Telecom already has over 550,000 km of fibre optic in its network and the amount is increasing daily. However, technological choice and consumer choice are also increasing and it is for the market to signal which services or technologies will be the most successful in the future——

Dr. Bray *rose*——

Mr. Forth: I am afraid that I cannot give way again, because I shall have to conclude my speech in about two minutes' time.

The House must understand that there is a great difference between recognising the value of technology, which we undoubtedly do, and encouraging, where necessary, British Telecom to do what it thinks is right because it is the expert. As I do, the hon. Member forWgan acknowledged that we have a world lead in that technology. Given that that is the case, there can be no grounds for the Government stepping in with taxpayers' money simply to do something which the market is already doing ably in responding to the needs and demands as they arise. We in the Department of Trade and Industry have a clear view about where we are going.

Many other points were raised in the debate and I shall study the record to see whether hon. Members require answers from me that I have been unable to give in the short time available to me. The importance that we attach to the matter is fairly obvious, not just from the Select Committee's report but from the care with which the Department of Trade and Industry put together its response to that report in the White Paper. Some unflattering things have been said about our White Paper, but I hope that hon. Members will appreciate that the White Paper at least gives full recognition to the Committee—to the importance of its report and to the detail of its work. The Department went to considerable lengths to reply in depths to the report, and it is to be regretted that we were unable to agree.

I hope that the Chairman and members of the Committee will realise that we attach great importance to this matter and will continue to do so. We shall examine carefully all the speeches made today—some of them very expert—to decide whether they should influence the direction that we take in future. I gladly——

Dr. Bray: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forth: No.

Dr. Bray: The Minister has five more minutes——

Mr. Forth: No, because I want to give the Chairman of the Committee the opportunity to wind up.

9.55 pm

Mr. Warren: I shall draw the attention of the House to the points that need answers and explanations. I regret that my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) has misinterpreted the report. She was the only hon. Member who was not in step, and I suggest that it would be a good idea to look at our recommendation 51, which suggests that IT matters should be dealt with at Minister of State level. That does not imply a Minister of information technology. Such a Minister could be responsible for finance, for the bicycle shed and IT.

My concern about the Bide report was that there was no reply at all from the Department. I thought that that was rather an insult from a Department which had called upon the members of the Committee to give their best contributions to the report and to serve for two or three years.

I am sure that many hon. Members will be surprised to know that, in both the Treasury and the Department of Health, there are Ministers with specific responsibility for looking after IT, just as our report recommended. I am delighted that they are there, and that in both Departments there is clear evidence of progress being made.

Many of the Select Committee's problems in compiling the report arose from lack of adequate statistics. I hope that the Government will come up with some better ideas, because many of the statistics with which we had to deal were two to four years out of date. That may account for the fact that we were told by officials giving evidence that the Government did not have an IT policy and then Ministers came along and said that they did. Improved statistics might help us all.

It is interesting to note that the Government have admitted that they do pick winners and that they are picking losers. That is not unusual, but we had always understood that they did not pick winners.

Let me deal briefly with the broad band communication system. I felt that the failing of the Macdonald report was that it did not involve the very people who were likely to be users. It did not even ask the questions of the Ministry of Defence, the prime candidate for becoming a user of that equipment. It did not ask the people in the City who dearly want that equipment. It did not ask people running financial services in Scotland, who know that they must have that equipment if they are to remain competitive. Not only do they want it; they are keen to invest in it. Industry is not looking for a Government subsidy all the way. I think that the Government should re-examine the matter and try to understand the opportunities that that system would create for those in business.

We have moved a long way tonight towards understanding that the Department of enterprise can become the Department of initiative. I gather that the gargantuan dinosaur of Government to which my hon. Friend the Minister referred is on the Government side and not in the Select Committee. I assure the House that the Select Committee, undaunted and as vigorous as ever, will return as necessary to the subject of IT, because it is fundamental to the future wealth of our nation.

9.59 pm

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): I have listened to the debate with interest, and I have heard what I can describe only as a wide range of views. I have reservations about some of the points that have been made on both sides of the argument. Before one comes to any conclusion about solutions, one must examine the causes of the difficulties in information technology.

Over the years, European countries have acted independently and have fought with one another in the development of information technology, but they have not succeeded. Japan has succeeded because it entered world

[Mr. Timothy Wood]

competition through consumer electronics and was thus able to build its research base and funding in a way that European countries did not. I hope that the Government will act to ensure that there is co-operation in Europe——

The Question necessary to dispose of the proceedings was deferred, pursuant to paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of Estimates).

It being Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to paragraph (5) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of Estimates), to put forthwith the deferred Question necessary to dispose of the proceedings on Estimates, 1989-90 (Class XI, Vote 3 and Class V, Vote 2).*

Question agreed to.

Class XI, Vote 3

Resolved,

That a further sum, not exceeding £259,162,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1990 for expenditure by the Home Office on court services, other services related to crime, probation and after-care, police, fire, civil defence, control of immigration and nationality, issue of passports, etc., other protective and community services, certain broadcasting services, data protection and other miscellaneous services including grants in aid and international subscriptions; and on administration (excluding prisons).

Class V, Vote 2

Resolved,

That a further sum, not exceeding £322,022,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1990, for expenditure by the Department of Trade and Industry at its research establishments (including the National Measurement Accreditation Service) and on the running costs of certain of its headquarters divisions, in its radiocommunications division and the Patent Office, support for industry (including industrial research and development, education, training, design, quality, marketing, management best practice and standards, business development and aircraft and aeroengine research and development), space technology programmes, protection of innovation, international trade (including export promotion, trade co-operation and international exhibitions), enterprise and job creation (the inner cities initiative and city action teams), miscellaneous support services, grants in aid, international subscriptions, provision of land and buildings, loans, grants, and other payments.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, at this day's sitting, the Human Organ Transplants Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. *—[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 90, Noes 2.

Division No. 286] **[10.01 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Durant, Tony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Moate, Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Riddick, Graham
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waller, Gary
Warren, Kenneth
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Ashton, Joe
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Human Organ Transplants Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 6

INFORMATION ABOUT TRANSPLANT OPERATIONS

'(1) The Secretary of State may make regulations requiring such persons as are specified in the regulations to supply to such authority as is so specified such information as may be so specified with respect to transplants that have been or are proposed to be carried out in Great Britain using organs removed from dead or living persons.

(2) Any such authority shall keep a record of information supplied to it in pursuance of the regulations made under this section.

(3) Any person who without reasonable excuse fails to comply with those regulations is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale; and any person who, in purported compliance with those regulations, knowingly or recklessly supplies information which is false or misleading in a material respect is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.

(4) The power to make regulations under this section shall be exercisable by statutory instrument subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'.
—*[Mr. Freeman.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

10.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I beg to move, That the clause be now read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following: New clause 1—*Register of Transplants*—

'It shall be the duty of every hospital which transplants human organs to keep a record of every such operation, its date, the derivation of the organ, tissue type, blood group, relationship with the recipient and the name of the surgeons and consultants involved, and such records should be forwarded to the Regional Health Authority within a calendar month of the transplant.'.

Sub-amendment (a) to new clause 1, at end insert 'and the United Kingdom Transplant Service'.

Mr. Freeman: New clause 1, in the name of the hon. Lady for Peckham (Ms. Harman), seeks to establish the statutory recording of the details of all human organ transplant operations, involving either live or cadaver donors. It was tabled in a similar form in Standing Committee.

In Committee I said that we would come back at Report stage with a new clause to encapsulate the essence of the amendment. At that time we accepted the idea of making it a statutory requirement to record information concerning human organ transplants involving live donors. Since Committee stage, we have given further consideration to this matter and decided that it would be useful to have a complete record of transplants involving both live and cadaver donors. Leading representatives of the medical profession have also expressed to the chief medical officer their support for comprehensive mandatory records, and I know that some hon. Members are of the same opinion. New clause 6 sets out our proposals.

Proposed amendment (a) to new clause 1 would mean that the United Kingdom transplant service would also hold the statutory records. That is impracticable, since UKTS is not a statutory body. In our proposed new clause, the authority which will keep a record of the information will be specified in regulations under the Bill. We intend that the authority for this purpose shall be the health authorities. We will also specify the precise requirements of information to be supplied in regulations.

The origins of the voluntary register to collect information about transplant operations go back far before the Human Organ Transplants Bill became necessary. Ministers agreed in principle to send out a health circular to initiate the register as long ago as 1986 and the medical profession also expressed their support for it. The arrangements to establish the voluntary register run by the United Kingdom transplant service were made before the decision was taken to include in the Bill the requirement to maintain a complete record.

It will be some months before the regulations come into force and, until then, the voluntary register will provide information on transplants. That time will also offer a valuable opportunity to see how a system of collecting information on transplants works and to bring to light any possible problems.

When the regulations setting up a system of statutory records are ready to come into force, we shall discuss with the medical profession whether it thinks there is any reason to continue the voluntary register and, if so, in what form. In Committee, we made a commitment to come back with a new clause, and I hope that new clause 6 fulfils that commitment.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): In Committee the Minister, in response to a new clause that we tabled, undertook to table a new clause today. I thank him for honouring that commitment.

We tabled new clause 1 tonight and the Government have tabled new clause 6. By my magnificent powers of deduction I believe that the Minister will not accept new clause 1, but will press new clause 6. New clause 1 has two advantages over new clause 6; the first is time, the second is specificity.

The Minister said that it will be a matter of months before the regulations come into force and that, until then, we shall have a voluntary register. He has said that, once we know how the voluntary register works, it will be possible to introduce the regulations. I am not satisfied that it should be in the lap of the gods as to when the regulations will be introduced to establish the register. I must press the Minister to give us some sort of maximum timetable for the introduction of those regulations. We are entitled to make such a request. He has not been sufficiently specific by just mentioning "months". I hope that he will tell us what the timetable should be—outside organisations interested in the Bill and in the register will demand nothing less.

New clause 1 would set up the register under statute. I do not believe there is any need for a long enabling clause that gives the Minister the ability to make regulations on all sorts of issues. Having talked to those organisations involved in the transplant programme, the Minister knows that there is a great deal of unanimity about the make-up and content of the register. I trust that the hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) will support me in that.

We do not need to make a big meal out of this, as it is fairly obvious what we want on the register. The Minister

[Ms. Harriet Harman]

need not bother himself with spending months examining the voluntary system and then drafting more regulations. If new clause 1 were accepted, the regulations would simply come into effect at the same time as the Bill. If new clause 1 were accepted, there would be no delay. We know what the specifics are, so we do not want to beat around the bush.

If the Minister insists on new clause 6, I would seek the minimum guarantee from him that all the points that are made in new clause 1 about what should be on the register are included in new clause 6. Such an undertaking would be helpful.

We are brimming with a lack of confidence in the Government's ability to get on with this, because we know that they are monstrously side-tracked with the impossible endeavour of trying to explain to the country the White Paper proposals. No one wants that White Paper, but the Government are trying to tell everyone that it is a terribly good idea. In the Department of Health, there is a political lack of impetus behind every other proposal. I do not want to see the Bill drift while Ministers slog up and down the country trying to persuade the people that the White Paper proposals are a good idea.

The Government's record on this issue is one of indecision and delay. The question of kidneys for sale arose as long ago as 1985 and the Government did nothing about it until a further kidney-for-sale scandal occurred at the end of last year and the beginning of this. Nearly four years had elapsed before the Government acted to make it an offence to sell kidneys. I am frightened that they may allow the establishment of the register to drift under the carpet with the legion of other issues while they remain frenetically concerned about the White Paper. Therefore, I ask the Minister to think again, accept our new clause 1 and take seriously any points made in its support, perhaps by the hon. Member for Newbury.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I thank my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for bringing forward new clause 6 and fulfilling a promise which he made, as the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) said, as a result of a clause tabled by the Opposition and me. However, my hon. Friend's introductory speech was too short for me to grasp the finer points of what he was saying. As I understand it, the new clause means that the Secretary of State may make regulations—*[Interruption.]* Would it be possible for those making interruptions from a sedentary position to give me a chance to make a speech on this detailed point?

As I understand it, the new clause means that the Secretary of State may make regulations requiring persons unknown to supply to an unnamed authority information which is not detailed, and that body shall keep a record of information supplied according to the regulations.

I recognise that that is an attempt to summarise the clause, and if my hon. Friend tells me that I have misunderstood it I shall give way immediately. However, if I have not misunderstood what he said, it seems that the first difference between his clause and new clause 1 is that I can understand new clause 1 but I cannot understand new clause 6.

New clause 1 lays down a clear-cut duty and seems to contain most, if not all, of what any of us would want to see in a register of transplant operations. The Government's new clause is more obscure and is linked to an authority which dares not speak its name, or even to tell us where it will meet.

My hon. Friend seemed to imply that the authority was a regional health authority. If that is so, he will surely find that the Bill now becomes misleading. If in new clause 6 the authority referred to is a regional health authority, and in clause 2(3) another authority—as clause 2 (3) puts it,

"The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that the prohibition in subsection (1) above shall not apply in cases where—

(a) such authority as is specified in or constituted by the regulations is satisfied—"

I for one will find myself wondering which authority is which and how we shall know to which authority each clause refers. Will my hon. Friend clarify that point?

Mr. Freeman: It might be helpful to my hon. Friend if I described the authority under clause 2. This is the authority which will look at all live donations between non-genetically related individuals. That is its sole function, and I said in Committee that we would lay down the regulations. That authority deals only with whether the non-genetically related individuals should be permitted to have a transplant of a kidney, which is the only organ which can be transplanted from live patients.

I apologise if my hon. Friend could not hear what I was saying earlier. In new clause 6, we are dealing with a separate issue—the recording of live and cadaveric transplants. It is a recording of an event which has taken place. It is not prospective: it is historical. It is designed to meet the point that my hon. Friend and other members of the Committee raised. It is a comprehensive register of all transplants.

We have not reached a conclusion on whether the authority in question should be a regional or district health authority. Perhaps, if I catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, I shall develop that point at greater length at the end of this brief debate.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for shedding light on the authority, but anyone reading the Bill after tonight's debate will still find the word "authority" in the clause and in the new clause, yet different authorities are meant. How will my hon. Friend clarify that so that there is no doubt in anyone's mind? I read the Government's new clause as referring to the authority mentioned in clause 2, so the speech that I subsequently prepared no longer makes sense. No matter; I have told my hon. Friend of my doubts and I am sure that I would not be the only person to draw the wrong conclusion from reading the word "authority" in the two versions.

I want to go a little further into why the new clause is worded as it is. As the hon. Member for Peckham asked, why is the statement to be voluntary—

"The Secretary of State may make regulations"?

That is not mandatory. Why was it felt necessary to begin with that open statement when, as the hon. Lady rightly said, the request for a mandatory register has been circulating for at least four years, if not longer? I find myself wondering whether the truth is that the regulations have not yet been put together by the Department.

I also find myself a little uneasy about the assurances that we have been given that this voluntary statement will be turned into a mandatory register at a later date. I have

been sent a letter dated 6 June 1989 by Mr. Ross Taylor, president of the British Transplantation Society. Under the heading "Policing the Present Bill", he writes:

"Since 1985 when the original troubles were first reported the British Transplantation Society has been trying to create a mandatory Register of all transplant operations, whether public or private, and covering all organs. We have repeatedly been told by the Department of Health that a mandatory Register is not possible because it would require legislation and we are repeatedly told that it cannot be incorporated in this present Bill. We believe very strongly that it should be incorporated in the present Bill and we can see very little reason why anyone should object to making a record of their transplant activity. We have all the documentation, all the computer work and all the arrangements in hand to establish a Register, but we are told that it will have to be a voluntary Register. If it is voluntary we may well miss the very few transplant operations which are the particular ones that we need to record. The Royal College of Surgeons of England has jointly agreed with the British Transplantation Society to supervise this register, but I don't think I am divulging any confidences when I tell you that the President-Elect of that College feels very strongly indeed, and has said so on many occasions, that the Register should be mandatory."

I agree with Mr. Taylor and with the president-elect. I hope from the nod that my hon. Friend the Minister is giving me that he, too, accepts that position. Although we are being asked to pass a clause which is not mandatory —I cannot understand why it should not be—I hope that we can have my hon. Friend's assurance that by this time next year the clause will have set up a mandatory register.

10.30 pm

If the clause does initiate the setting up of a register, who will keep it? I do not think that my hon. Friend the Minister told us that. Is the register to be made public in any way? Can hon. Members, for example, ask for a debate on the register? Will that be possible? Why should the register not be kept by the United Kingdom Transplant Service? The Minister says that it is not a statutory body, but it is the body which co-ordinates transplants in the United Kingdom. If not the United Kingdom Transplant Service, why not the British Transplantation Society? The president of the society is saying, "I have the equipment and the wherewithal."

It seems so obvious to me that that is the machinery that should be used to keep the register, to keep it within the hands of those who are most closely involved and who are most anxious that the ethics of transplantation should be maintained at the highest possible level. I have an article from the *British Medical Journal* of 1986, I think, which sets out recommendations on the use of living kidney donors in the United Kingdom by the British Transplantation Society. The recommendations could have been a model for any legislation that we have discussed in our deliberations.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give me a promise that the voluntary element in the clause will be translated into a mandatory register within 12 months. I hope also that he will seriously consider whether the United Kingdom Transplant Service or the British Transplantation Society should become the body to manage the register, to keep it up to date, and to be answerable for what goes into it.

Mr. Freeman: I hope that I can give all the assurances that my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) has sought. New clause 6 is the Government's response to a system that I was asked in Committee to introduce on Report. It is a mandatory reporting system for health authorities covering all live and cadaveric organ donations. We shall introduce regulations—I am happy to respond to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman), who asked for an assurance —under the new clause and under clause 2, which deals with non-genetically related live donations.

New clause 6 deals with the reporting system, and we shall introduce regulations as soon as possible—I hope that that will be before the end of the calendar year. The regulations will be debatable. We shall be specifying to whom the reports should be made. We still have not resolved whether it should be regional or district health authorities. We shall be specifying also what should be reported. I assure the hon. Member for Peckham that we shall bear in mind the text of new clause 1, which is specific on what should be reported.

The voluntary register is to be organised by the United Kingdom Transplant Service. It will be running for the balance of this year, for the six months prior to the coming into operation of the reporting mechanism under the regulations. For that period the voluntary register will be performing a valuable service. For the purposes of research, perhaps, clinicians will be more likely to turn to the voluntary register for greater detail than to the Department of Health. I am thinking of aggregate statistics that we might have from the regional and district health authorities under the reporting mechanism.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Who will keep the voluntary register?

Mr. Freeman: We will not frustrate or stand in the way of the continuation of a voluntary register, which could proceed simultaneously with the separate reporting mechanism envisaged under new clause 6. I well appreciate the argument that the voluntary register might provide the research data that clinicians need.

I shall now answer the points raised by the hon. Member for Peckham. I have dealt with the expected timing of the laying of regulations, which will be debatable. We need to consult the medical professions about what is specified in the reporting mechanism and to whom the report should be made. As to the hon. Lady's suggestion of a lack of impetus, I had hoped that she might congratulate the Government on their rapid progress. The Second Reading Committee was on Tuesday 16 May and now, in the first week of July, the House will—I hope—shortly be giving the Bill a Third Reading. I hope that we shall make rapid progress so that the other place can complete proceedings so quickly that the essential provisions of the Bill can come into force.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: I am sorry to delay the House——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman has already spoken once, and under consideration I regret that I cannot allow him to speak again.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 7

PROSECUTIONS

'No proceedings for an offence under section 1 or 2 above shall be instituted in England and Wales except by or with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions.'.—*[Mr. Freeman.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Freeman: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I shall not detain the House. The new clause would ensure that prosecutions under clauses 1 and 2 of the Bill could go ahead in England and Wales only with the prior consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions. This is to prevent frivolous private prosecutions. A similar clause has been used previously in other Acts whose subject matter is emotive, such as the Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985. I commend the new clause to the House.

Ms. Harman: By introducing the new clause at this stage the Minister is making it unduly restrictive. I quite understand that he does not want private prosecutions, and I support him on that. However, it does not mean that he needs to erect the hurdle of requiring the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions. If he wanted to exclude private prosecutions, he should have simply done that. This new clause, together with his rejection of new clause 2, makes this an unenforceable statement of intent rather than a proper addition to the criminal law. I do not understand why he did not simply rule out private prosecutions rather than including the hurdle of the DPP —who, I understand, has plenty to do without having to take on this additional duty.

Mr. Freeman: The practical effect of excluding private prosecutions is, essentially, to put the matter into the hands of the DPP. I admit, although not a lawyer, that it was our intention to include this provision in the original draft of the Bill. I regret having to come to the House at this stage to seek its agreement to the new clause. It is not an afterthought; it is a correction.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time and added to the Bill.

New Clause 2

DISCIPLINARY OFFENCES

'It shall automatically be deemed a disciplinary offence of serious misconduct if a doctor is guilty of an offence under this Act.'.—*[Ms. Harman.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Ms. Harman: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 2 simply says that if a doctor commits an offence under the Act it will constitute serious misconduct and so require the GMC to consider the matter as a disciplinary offence.

There is a history to this. In the past, the problem has been that, despite prima facie evidence that a doctor had been involved in such activities, the GMC was not prepared to take any action.

I know that in response the Minister will say that another statute says that if a doctor commits any criminal offence it is open to the GMC to look at the matter and take disciplinary action. We know that it has the power to look at it, but new clause 2 obliges it, at least on a prima facie basis, to consider an offence under the Act as a disciplinary offence of serious misconduct. Its failure to do so in the past has led to the need for the Bill. Had the GMC acted more swiftly and purposefully, we would not have needed the Bill in the first place.

Without new clause 2 it would be open to the GMC to say that a doctor has been prosecuted and found guilty under the legislation, but that he has been punished enough by the courts and by having his name in the paper so the matter will be left there and the doctor will be allowed to get on with the job.

The new clause makes an offence under the Act automatically a disciplinary matter. I cannot for the life of me see why the Minister should object to it. He is simply being a bit backward in coming forward on positive issues on the Bill. The Minister should get a grip on the issue. It is obvious that we need the new clause and the Minister should allow it to be included in the Bill.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) asks me to get a grip on the new clause. I hope that I have had a grip on the Bill during its proceedings. If a doctor is convicted under the Bill, which we hope will shortly become an Act, the hon. Lady wants automatically to instruct the GMC to disbar the doctor.

Ms. Harman: No, to look at it.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Lady has offered no evidence that the GMC has expressed any lack of interest in the Bill or any intention not to investigate or debar those who are convicted. The reverse is true: the GMC has expressed its firm support for the Bill.

I said in Committee that I would be happy to look again at this, and I have done so. One of the values of our parliamentary proceedings is that we have time for reflection. I am clear that we should not breach the general principle that where disciplinary powers are given to a court or a council such as the GMC—which was given those powers by the Medical Act 1983—it should not at the same time be told that it must automatically take certain action on certain cases brought before it. That negates the whole purpose of setting up a body with discretion.

I am satisfied, as I hope that the House will be, that the new clause is not necessary. I ask the hon. Lady not to press it to a vote. There will be other occasions to debate the broader principles of how the GMC behaves, when I shall be happy to join the hon. Lady. The new clause raises wider issues and the hon. Lady has not made her case.

Ms. Harman: The Minister says that I have brought forward no evidence of the GMC's lack of interest. As I mentioned in moving the new clause, it spent four years doing nothing, even when the subject was a matter of public outcry. Its lack of interest is a matter of public record and concern. The Minister would not have had to bring the legislation before the House if the GMC had shown any interest before. The evidence of its lack of interest is the existence of the Bill, and that is lamentable.

The Minister says that I am asking that a doctor should automatically be debarred if found guilty of an offence under the Act. I am not. He should understand that an offence of serious misconduct requires the GMC to look at the matter for disciplinary purposes. A range of penalties is then open to it, ranging from debarring or suspending from practice right down to a polite letter telling him not to do it again. I am not putting forward automatic

debarring; I am just saying that the matter should be put under the GMC's nose so that it does not escape its attention in the way that it has done for the past five years. However, I shall not press the matter to a vote.

Question put and negatived.

Clause 2

RESTRICTION ON TRANSPLANTS BETWEEN PERSONS NOT GENETICALLY RELATED

10.45 pm

Mr. Freeman: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 2, line 30, after 'children', insert

'of his brothers and sisters of the whole or half blood or'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 1, in page 2, line 31, at end insert

'and (e) his nephews and nieces of the whole or half blood.'

No. 2, in page 2, line 44, at end insert—

'(c) the person into whom the organ is to be transplanted is

(i) the spouse of, or

(ii) related by marriage within the degrees laid down by subsection (2) above to the person from whom the organ is removed.'.

Mr. Freeman: We accepted the principle of amendment No. 1 in Committee. It was not our intention to exclude nephews and nieces from the definition of genetic relations for the purposes of the Bill, and, as promised in Committee, we have tabled amendment No. 3, which will have the effect of including them in the definition.

Amendment No. 2 was also tabled in Committee but was withdrawn by the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman). I was given to understand that the hon. Lady accepted my argument on why the statutory exclusions from the prohibitions of clause 2 should not be extended. However, as the amendment has been tabled again, I shall repeat my reasons for urging hon. Members to resist it.

Amendment No. 2 seeks to extend exemptions to prohibitions under clause 2 far beyond what is intended. The Bill already excludes genetically related people from scrutiny by the authority. A reason for that is that the existence of a close genetic relationship can be verified with a high degree of accuracy by laboratory testing. In this country, the vast majority of live transplants would be covered by that exemption, as close family members are both more likely to come forward to offer themselves as donors and to prove compatible, in the medical sense.

Under the Bill, the existence of a genetic relationship would be verified in each case in an objective way by such testing. Appropriate tests may have already been carried out in the process of trying to establish the compatibility of the donor and would-be recipient. In the case of relatives "in law" or people not related at all to the would-be recipient, the existence of some kind of relationship or personal tie is more difficult to establish. Unfortunately, we cannot rule out the possibility of non-genetic "relationships" being formed solely for the purpose of the operation or of pressure—economic or otherwise—being brought to bear upon a donor to submit to a transplant operation.

For those reasons, it is intended that the authority will consider the available evidence in each case where no genetic relationship has been established, before giving an independent decision on whether an offer of donation is altruistic. However, the fact that the authority will scrutinise all cases of live donation between non-related persons does not imply that unnecessary obstacles will be placed in the way of transplants between spouses or "in law" relations. I suggest that amendment No. 2 is contrary to the whole intention of clause 2. I urge the hon. Lady to reflect further and not to press it to a Division.

Ms. Harman: Long ago in the distant past, before I became a Member of Parliament, I wanted to be a parliamentary draftsman. Government amendment No. 3 has been introduced at this late stage because the Government become so confused by all the gobbledegook that they omit to say what they really mean. In this case, they omitted nephews and nieces from the definition because they were so busy referring to

"brothers and sisters of the whole or half blood."

Helpfully, with my otherwise under-used parliamentary drafting skills—and certainly for free—I drafted amendment No. 1. But the Government prefer their gobbledegook, which is more complicated and will therefore provide more work for the lawyers. None the less, the definition has been restored, so I am grateful to the Minister for at least incorporating what would otherwise have been a significant omission.

The Minister reminds me that in Committee the intellectual brilliance of his arguments swayed me against my own amendment to include married people and people related by marriage. However, when it came to drafting my amendments, the force of his arguments escaped me. Now that he has made them again, I am happy to accept them, and I shall not press amendments Nos. 1 and 2.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: My hon. Friend the Minister referred to the authority in clause 2. He said that it is the body that will give consent to these various operations. Again, I am puzzled. Is he saying that the transplants that will take place have been notified to the authority referred to in new clause 6 and that they will be notified also to the authority referred in clause 2, so that two authorities work together? Are both authorities to keep a record of all these transplants? If not, one authority will be aware of all the transplants taking place within families and one will not. I cannot see how that is possible. Unless both authorities know what is going on, the authority that is meant to police the Bill cannot function. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would clarify that point.

Mr. C. J. Rudge, consultant transplant surgeon, has said:

"I have considerable reservations about this second clause in the Bill. There are a number of situations in which the emotional relationship between a potential donor and recipient can be overwhelmingly in favour of allowing transplantation to proceed. I am thinking in particular of transplantation between husband and wife (or vice versa), between step-parents and their children"—

they are not referred to anywhere in the Bill—

"and even between individuals related by marriage. I can see nothing morally or ethically wrong for transplants in any of these categories to be carried out, and I have considerable anxieties that they are all made illegal by this Bill. There is no doubt that the number of cadaver kidneys becoming available in this country does not meet, and is never likely to meet, the requirements for the number of patients awaiting transplantation. Within my NHS practice I am currently carrying out a number of emotionally related transplants—until now exclusively between husband and wife. I am very concerned that if these transplants are to be stopped then this would have a significantly detrimental effect on the dialysis and transplant programme within the NHS."

[Sir Michael McNair-Wilson]

Mr. Rudge referred to step-parents, about which no hon. Member has spoken yet. Can my hon. Friend the Minister say anything about step-parents being included in the legislation?

Mr. Freeman: Under clause 2, an authority will be established under regulations. It will comprise perhaps 12 members, perhaps under a medical chairman. Its purpose is to permit, or not permit, transplants between those who are not genetically related. It is a screening mechanism prior to the transplant. It relates only to live transplants. I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that we are not making ethical pronouncements about what is or is not acceptable. In Committee, I said that I could well understand that proposed transplants between spouses, who were not therefore genetically related—or, to use my hon. Friend's example, stepchildren—would be perfectly in order. It is important that we do not send a message that, if the proposed transplants were altruistic and the tissues matched, the House or the authority would frown on them. I hope that that answers my hon. Friend's question.

New clause 6 deals with the reporting mechanism ex post facto of all live and cadaver organ transplants. It is a separate issue. The reporting mechanism provides information and permits monitoring or "policing", as my hon. Friend said, of the intent and purposes of the Bill. The two are totally separate. The authority under clause 2 is a group of individuals, perhaps under a medical chairman. Under new clause 6, we are talking about authorities as being regional and district health authorities that gather and collect the information on transplants that have taken place.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 75 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

AGRICULTURE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Cereals Marketing Act (Application to Oil Seeds) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 7th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered.

That, notwithstanding the practice of the House as to the intervals between stages of Bills brought in upon Ways and Means Resolutions, more than one stage of the Finance Bill may be taken at any sitting of the House.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

PETITION

Channel Tunnel

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I wish to present a petition which I fully support. I will read it to the House:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of citizens of Great Britain and Northern Ireland showeth that we, the undersigned constituents and supporters of CLORS oppose British Rail's plans to route Channel Tunnel passenger and freight trains on the existing overground railway line through Clapham on the grounds that we will suffer intolerable hardship and environmental damage to our lives and property.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for Transport:

(1) To order an independent environmental impact study in full consultation with all affected residents and businesses in Clapham so that the hardship we will endure can be measured and recognised.

(2) To hold a full-scale public inquiry into the entire British Rail Channel Tunnel rail project as it affects South London, before the Private Bill is presented to the assembled Parliament.

(3) To ensure proper consideration of sensible alternative rail schemes to fulfil the rail transport needs of the country as a whole in the light of the Channel Tunnel.

(4) To ensure that full protection for your humble Petitioners from the effects of Channel Tunnel rail traffic and particularly of heavy freight traffic at all hours, is incorporated into any legislation authorising such traffic.

The petition has been signed by just over 1,000 petitioners in the Clapham area.

To lie upon the Table.

Property Developers (Code of Practice)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

10.56 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): This is the fourth Adjournment debate which I have been fortunate to have relating to the planning system, which shows the importance it has to my constituents and to many people in other constituencies. Indeed, it is only a few months since my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) had an Adjournment debate on planning appeals in Croydon, when he said:

"People in north Croydon and elsewhere are beginning to feel instinctively that the quality of their environment is deteriorating. They believe that local democracy is gradually being eroded. They have an instinctive feeling that, whenever commercial pressures and environmental interests clash, commercial pressures will win the day."—*[Official Report*, 17 February 1989; Vol. 147, c. 685.]

In November 1987, the ITN "World in Action" Granada television series had a programme entitled "The Planning Game". The programme made a big impact on its audience. It listed examples of how property developers are getting their own way and how aggressive developers, determined to get what they want, can exploit loopholes. It showed some examples, one of which was in my constituency.

The first example was a building that was supposed to be a stables in the green belt which had mysteriously turned into a luxurious £750,000 bungalow. The second example was of a fine meadow in flower, which had been listed as a site of special scientific interest, but which had been sprayed with weed killer and turned into a building site.

The third example featured a well-known west country developer, Mr. Mike Robertson, who was shown getting away with all kinds of abuses, and happily paying fines of £5,500 when he cut down protected trees to develop a valuable site. The fourth example showed ancient verderers' rights in the New Forest being traded off with the council for development advantages, using the private Bill procedure.

The fifth example showed Barratt as the developer using intimidating tactics with local councils to stop them objecting to its proposals. The sixth example, in my constituency, was Birtenshaw farm. It was an example of the developer—Barratt again—finding a legal loophole and getting the Secretary of State to grant planning permission, against the wishes of both the local council and his own inspectors.

I should now like to highlight the present position at Birtenshaw farm, where protesters are camped on the land preventing Barratt from moving its bulldozers, which arrived on Monday of this week. For the past 55 years, Birtenshaw farm has enjoyed the protection of a covenant restricting development on the land. My hon. Friend will be aware that I raised this matter in an Adjournment debate on 7 July 1987 and that in November last year the Government refused to waive the covenant when requested to do by Barratt. Unfortunately, Bolton council has decided not to defend the covenant, to the great dismay of the residents.

I have asked Mr. John Swanson, the chairman of Barratt, to meet me to discuss the situation, but unfortunately he has declined to do so. What sort of behaviour is that, when Sir Lawrence Barratt, who is now life president of the company, says that he wants to become involved in inner-city charities or to take up public office? I appeal to him to respect the spirit of the Ashworth covenant and to give the land to the people of Bolton. I should be glad to recommend him for public office if he took that line.

In a letter to me this week the Prime Minister says:

"I can understand the disappointment of those opposed to the development of this land at finding that the covenant which they thought prevented it is no longer considered to be effective."

It may be that local public opinion could persuade the company not to go ahead with the development, despite the planning permission, but this would be entirely the company's decision. Barratt should heed this, and call off its bulldozers.

I ask my hon. Friend what he can do to revoke the planning permission at Birtenshaw farm, which now has only 12 months to run. Can he not do more to strengthen old covenants? The 1934 agreement was not fully ratified because the second world war intervened, but would my hon. Friend look at the 1986 report of the conveyancing standing committee of the Law Society, which listed five options under the heading, "What Shall we do about Old Restrictive Covenants"? Option 5 suggests compensation for those who have lost out as a result of the failure of the Land Registry properly to record a covenant. Would not that help the residents of Birtenshaw? The Royal Town Planning Institute call for a time limit on covenants of between 40 and 60 years, but surely there should be provision for renewal of covenants where they still serve a purpose.

In January 1987 the Royal Town Planning Institute issued an agenda for "Improving the Planning System for the 1990s". The agenda lists 75 items. One of these—No. 64—was for the establishment of a Planning Assessment Commission, like the Audit Commission, to monitor lapses of performance by local authorities. Another, No. 57, calls for approval by Parliament itself whenever the Secretary of State attempts to override his own inspector's report. I should have liked to see both those courses of action implemented to help the residents before the "battle of Birtenshaw" had started.

The Council for the Protection of Rural England has strongly supported my call for a code of practice to encourage property developers to abide by the spirit of the planning legislation. Indeed, it goes further and asks for legislation to put teeth into a code of practice, to enforce the recommendations of the report in February this year by Robert Carnwath QC on "Enforcing Planning Control". This follows the 1987 report by the efficiency scrutiny team which called for "unlawful development notices," supported by a "guide to procedure," to curb property developers and to help local planning authorities.

As the Granada programme said, property developers today are getting a lot more confident about their ability to get round planning restrictions. To quote the former planning officer, Mr. Proctor, they are getting "extremely brass necked". My hon. Friend is already aware of the brass neck of another developer, Mr. Robert Horrocks, who was the subject of my Adjournment debate on 10 April. There is still no improvement in Harwood precinct, where the whole community is being denied a shopping facility for which planning permission was granted many years ago.

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

I call on my hon. Friend to bring in some really tough laws to deal with these abuses. Any property developer found flouting them should be struck off. In other words, he should not be allowed to become involved in any property dealing in any shape or form. Fines of a few thousand pounds are meaningless when millions of pounds are at stake. Covenants should be properly enforced, and the new computerised Land Registry should allow for compensation by the Lands Tribunal in cases where old covenants are found now to be defective.

The British Property Federation say that its objectives are, first—not surprisingly—to look after its members' interests, and secondly, to enhance its industry's standing in the community, but the president, Mr. Mallinson, advises that the word "developer" is deemed

"synonymous with rapacity and greed."

By contributing £14 million to save archaeology, the British Property Federation can point to the success of the 1986 code of practice in protecting archaeology. That is an example of how the Government can help bring about necessary improvements in developers' behaviour.

I shall list some of the points raised by Bolton council when I drew its attention to the fact that we were to have this debate. Under the heading "Some Difficulties Created by the Present Arrangements" the council lists the following:

1. The life of a planning permission is related to the commencement of the development within a fixed period. It has been established that the digging of a simple trench capable of taking a strip foundation amounts to commencement. Hence a developer can carry out minimal site works with no intention of proceeding further and thereby extend the life of the permission indefinitely. Local examples include a hotel development proposed in the green belt.
2. Unauthorised changes of use are notoriously difficult to resolve and can involve several years of enforcement action."

It lists examples from elsewhere in Bolton.

"Stop notices may be served but there are compensation issues which make local authorities reluctant to take such steps. The unauthorised users are able to exploit the situation whereby a use can continue for a long period before action is taken in the courts.

3. Trees which are protected may be felled by a developer to whom the development potential is worth more than the fine for unauthorised felling (£2,000) or the value of the tree whichever is greater). This can be a very small price to pay for an unobstructed site.
4. Duplicate applications have been submitted recently in respect of:-
    1. The Shipgates development . . .
    2. Hill Lane, Blackrod for residential development.

    In neither instance did this tactic have any bearing on the outcome of the application."

The council has not listed another tactic that some developers adopt, which is that of knocking down listed buildings.

I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the great depth of feeling in my constituency, about this issue and the related issues that I have mentioned. My constituents would like to know exactly what the Government's position is and what prospects there are for legislation in the forthcoming Session to put these matters right.

In conclusion, I refer my hon. Friend to the writings of Professor Hayek, who is now 90 years old. Writing in 1960 on housing and town planning, in his book "The Constitution of Liberty", he says:

"The practical problems which policy makers have are of great complexity, and no perfect solution is to be expected."

We understand the difficulties that the Government face, but we look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say.

I thank those who have helped me to prepare for the debate—the Library, the Royal Institute of Town Planning, the Council for the Protection of Rural England and Bolton council. I call on my hon. Friend to do what he can not only for the residents of Birtenshaw, but for all the people of this country, and bring in legislation to enforce the necessary curbs on those property developers who abuse the freedoms of the existing planning laws.

11.8 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on raising this interesting topic. Once again, he has used an opportunity to raise issues of concern to his constituents, some of whom I understand are present to listen to the debate. My hon. Friend quoted Professor Hayek, saying that planning problems raise issues of great complexity and that no perfect solution is to be expected. That is helpful to me, because it means that my hon. Friend will not be disappointed by anything that I say in this speech.

I will say a few words later about the matter at Birtenshaw farm, but, before I do so, I will respond to my hon. Friend's proposal that property developers should be subject to a code of practice, and set that proposal in the context of the town and country planning system as it operates today.

Our system of town and country planning has its origins in the Town and Country Planning Act 1947. That Act was updated and consolidated in 1962, and again in 1971, but the essence of the system has stood up well to the test of time.

The 1947 Act took away many of the rights of an individual to develop his land in the way that he wanted. It gave local authorities primary power to decide whether planning permission should be granted. It has long been established that planning permission should be granted unless the development proposal would harm an interest of acknowledged importance, and reasons for refusal should always be well founded and clearly defined. In the 1947 Act, Parliament provided the right of appeal to the Secretary of State if the local authority turned down a planning application.

That right of appeal was in recognition of the fact that rights to develop land have been taken away. The 1947 Act took no rights from third party objectors. Indeed, it gave them a right that they retain today, which is the opportunity to express their views about development proposals, and to have them taken into account by the local authority or the Secretary of State when planning applications and appeals are decided.

My hon. Friend has argued eloquently the case for local opponents of development proposals. I should like to invite him to consider the planning system from the developer's point of view.

There are many types of property developer. A developer may be an individual householder who wants to extend his house to provide more space for a growing family. He may be a small business man who needs to extend his premises to expand his firm and provide more

jobs. He may be an industrialist wanting to modernise factory premises. He may be a retailer, keen to improve the quality of shopping space for the consumer. He may be a volume housebuilder providing houses in which people want to live.

Any developer has to put in an application for planning permission. If the local authority turns down the application or fails to issue a decision on it within eight weeks, the developer can appeal to the Secretary of State.

At present, largely because of the strength of the national economy, local authorities in England and my Department have experienced a considerable increase in the numbers of planning applications and appeals. The number of appeals received in the Department last year was 28,500, compared with fewer than half that number in 1983.

Inevitably, handling a huge volume of appeals takes time, and a developer whose planning application is refused and who then goes to appeal is likely to have to wait many months, from the time he first puts in his planning application to the local authority to the day he receives a decision letter on his appeal.

For a developer who has purchased an interest in land, and so has capital tied up in his development proposal, such delay can be extremely costly. The Government wish to reduce the time taken to deal with planning applications and appeals, while ensuring that the quality of the decisions is maintained. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that a good decision is often the one that is taken swiftly. A decision is not necessarily improved by the months that are often taken deliberating over it.

Nevertheless, it is important that development proposals should receive both professional scrutiny and appropriate publicity. There is an opportunity for the public to participate in the planning process, whether by writing letters of objection to the local planning authority or the Secretary of State, or by taking part in a public local inquiry into development proposals.

The Government have advised local authorities that any relevant views expressed by local residents should be taken into account in determining planning applications. Nevertheless, on its own, local opposition to a proposal is not a ground for refusing planning permission, unless that opposition is founded upon valid planning reasons supported by substantive evidence. The substance of local opposition must be considered, but the duty is to decide each case on its merits.

It also has to be said that the purpose of the planning system is to regulate the development and use of land in the public interest. It is not to protect the private interests of one person against the activities of another. The material question is whether a development proposal would affect the locality generally and unacceptably affect amenities that should be protected in the public interest.

I can understand that my hon. Friend wants planning legislation to be tightened up. He has referred to a code of practice to be enshrined in legislation, with the objective of ensuring that developers are more responsive to the views of local people.

I have sought to explain how the planning system is already highly responsive to local opinion. The existing legislation makes local authorities responsible for preparing a local development plan for their areas, and for deciding planning applications. The Government want as many planning applications as possible to be determined locally. I am pleased to say that, at present, over 98 per cent. of planning permissions are granted by local authorities. That means that fewer than 2 per cent. of planning permissions result from decisions by my right hon. Friend or his inspectors on appeal. Only one third of rejected planning applications go to appeal, and nearly two thirds of appeals are then unsuccessful. Those figures demonstrate that planning is a local activity in practice, as Parliament intended.

My hon. Friend will know that the Government are not complacent about planning legislation. In January, we published a White Paper entitled "The Future of Development Plans," which contained firm proposals for requiring local planning authorities to prepare local plans for the whole of their areas.

The existence of an up-to-date districtwide local plan, which will have been the subject of extensive public consultation, should ensure that the local authority's decisions on development proposals are far less susceptible to revision on appeal. It should also lessen the number of appeals. That would enable local planning authorities and the Department to give all the consumers of the planning system, including developers and local objectors, a better standard of service.

My hon. Friend referred to the issue of planning enforcement, and he is right to say that if we are to have a system of planning which enjoys the confidence of the people it must be backed by enforcement procedures that are seen to be effective. A review was undertaken by Robert Carnwath QC. He produced his report in February. It contained a number of recommendations, which have been widely supported, for improving the system. The Government have published a consultation paper about the recommendations, and we have received a number of comments on it. I assure my hon. Friend that we will bring forward legislation on those matters as soon as parliamentary time permits.

I shall consider my hon. Friend's arguments about the need for a code of practice to regulate developers' behaviour. Inevitably, there will be some developers whose standards of behaviour fall short of expectations. That is why Parliament has provided enforcement powers. But it is not only some developers whose behaviour may fall short of an expected standard. The same is true in all sectors of human activity.

My hon. Friend referred to the issue at Birtenshaw farm. He has left no doubt that he and many of his constituents in the Bromley Cross and Bradshaw areas of Bolton strongly oppose that development. Local people showed that by their actions last Monday, when they succeeded in preventing the developer from beginning work on the site.

I can readily imagine the disappointment of local people when it became known that a covenant which was made in 1934, which seemed to ensure that the land would remain open, was not thought to be enforceable after all. That news must have been particularly depressing to local hopes for the site, because it came soon after the Secretary of State had rejected Barratt's request to remove the restriction contained in the covenant.

That covenant was an entirely separate issue from the matter of planning permission. The decision to retain the covenant did not affect the planning appeal decision to grant planning permission; nor was it a comment on the merits of the appeal decision.

Barratt is now left with a planning permission which it obtained after properly completing all the relevant

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

planning procedures. If there are no other legal restrictions on developing the land, which it now appears there are not, it is fully entitled to implement that permission.

I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend said about the case, but it does not seem to me that there are any grounds for believing that Barratt has in any way acted improperly in the matter. My hon. Friend is entitled to his view of the scheme and to oppose it vigorously through all the legal means open to him, as he has done. Equally, Barratt is entitled to seek to carry out a scheme for which it has obtained planning permission.

Planning procedures provide opportunities for opposing opinions to be expressed and considered before decisions are taken. The trouble in the Birtenshaw farm case was not that such opportunities were not provided, but that the outcome was unwelcome to many local people. That does not indicate any fault in the planning system. Unwelcome decisions often have to be taken. Nor does it indicate to me a need for the imposition of a code of practice on top of the planning system. Indeed, I find it difficult to visualise a code that would operate to deter a developer from proceeding with work which he is entitled to carry out in accordance with a valid planning permission.

My hon. Friend asked whether my right hon. Friend would intervene to revoke the planning permission that exists for the development at Birtenshaw farm, or to convene a public local inquiry. I have heard nothing to convince me that such action would be justified. There are statutory powers available to revoke planning permission, but my right hon. Friend has used his power only extremely rarely. He takes the view that the power should be used where the original decision is judged to be so grossly wrong that damage is likely to be done to the wider public interest. I think that my hon. Friend knows that it is open to the local authority to initiate revocation procedures. If the authority seeks to do that, there is a well-established procedure and, following on from that procedure, a system of compensation. Some people are under the misapprehension that if, for example, my right hon. Friend were to seek to revoke the planning permission himself, he would be landed with the bill for paying the compensation. I must tell my hon. Friend that, even if my right hon. Friend were to initiate the revocation procedure, the bill for any compensation that might result would have to be met by the local council—in other words, by the local ratepayers, or the community charge payers with effect from April of next year. If the local council and the local people want to start revocation proceedings, there is nothing to stop them doing that. I can understand that that might lead to a lively debate in the Bolton council chamber.

I believe that in general the existing system of planning control provides sufficient checks and balances. Developers, local authorities or third party objectors do not have carte blanche to ride roughshod over the planning system. If there is to be a code of practice, it should surely be a voluntary one drawn up by property developers—for example, the British Property Federation. My hon. Friend has referred to the voluntary code that was drawn up to deal with sites of archaeological importance, which I believe is an important code of practice.

My hon. Friend also referred to a number of other initiatives which he believes could be taken to improve the effectiveness of the planning system. I assure him that some of those ideas are very much in the forefront of the Government's mind, as we move towards what we hope will be an early legislative opportunity to reform our planning system.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-one minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 7 July 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Citizens' Compensation Bill (Mr. Speaker's Ruling)

9.36 am

Mr. Speaker: I have looked again, with great care, at the amendments to the Citizens' Compensation Bill to which the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) added his name yesterday. It is unusual for amendments in the name of an hon. Member in charge of a Bill not to be called, and perhaps I owe the hon. Gentleman an explanation. Incidentally, the House well understands why the hon. Gentleman was unable to add his name to the amendments before yesterday.

In the provisional selection list published yesterday afternoon, I was not able to select the amendments concerned, then standing in the name of the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot), because in my view they amounted to a wrecking of the Bill, which was given a Second Reading and approved by the Standing Committee. Since the hon. Member for Leigh added his name to the amendments, I have re-examined the position carefully, but as my judgment was based on the matter of order rather than on selection, I very much regret that I am unable to change my ruling.

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Far be it for me to question your judgment and your ability to assess a situation that inevitably conflicts with the rules of the House, but I listened to your ruling with some dismay and disappointment because it means that the Bill will be hijacked to a large extent. Nevertheless, I honourably accept your ruling, Mr. Speaker, in view of your long experience and of my deep respect for you, which I shall always have.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for so carefully considering amendment No. 1 in particular—and we fully understand and respect your reason for not selecting it. I take this opportunity to say that the Government have looked very carefully at amendment No. 1 and are consulting the judiciary about minute details and certain aspects of it. Subject only to that, the Government are grateful to the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) for the opportunity that his Bill gives to debate that amendment. The Government looked for a way to take it into statute, and we will seek a future opportunity to bring to fruition that which the hon. Gentleman has given us an opportunity to start.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I too am aware of the great care that was taken not only last evening but in the early hours of this morning, and more recently, to ensure that the business put before the House today is fully within its rules. I cast my mind back to the Firearms (Amendment) Bill. Clauses that had been deliberately excluded by the Government during the earlier stages of the Bill were included on Report, a very late stage in the legislation. As a student of procedure, I am genuinely puzzled as to why changes can be permitted in one direction yet not in another.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the easiest way to deal with the matter would be for the hon. Gentleman and for the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) to come and see me privately about the matter when I shall be very happy to explain it to them.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I too am grateful to you for having spent a good deal of time on considering whether the amendments should be dealt with. I have a great deal of sympathy for the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) who says that his Bill has been hijacked. It is now a completely different Bill from the one to which the House gave a Second Reading. In Committee the hon. Member for Leigh very sensibly, honourably and rightly dropped the first four clauses of the Bill, which were the main meat of the Bill. Another clause was added in Committee to deal with no-fault compensation. It was an entirely different clause and it led the Bill off in an entirely different direction. I am not sure that the House has given a Second Reading to the Bill that we are to discuss this morning and whether it now accords with the long title.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member puts his finger on the very point. If he cares to join the hon. Members for Leigh and for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), I shall be only too happy to expand upon the matter.

Orders of the Day

Parking Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Lords amendment: No. 1, after clause 2, to insert the following new clause—*Display of information*—

". The following section shall be inserted after the section 35A inserted by section 2 above—

35B.—(1) The Secretary of State may make regulations requiring local authorities to display at off-street parking places provided by them under section 32 above such information about parking there as is specified in the regulations.

(2) Regulations under this section may also—

(a) require the display of any orders under section 35(1) above relating to the parking place;

(b) specify the manner in which the information and orders are to be displayed;

(c) exempt local authorities, in specified circumstances or subject to specified conditions, from the requirement to display information and orders, or to display them in the specified manner; and

(d) provide, in relation to a parking place at which a local authority fails to comply with the regulations or with any specified provision of the regulations, that, except in any specified circumstances, any order under section 35(1) above shall be of no effect in its application to that parking place in so far as it requires the payment of any charge in connection with use of the parking place—

(i) while the failure to comply continues, and

(ii) as respects vehicles parked there when the failure to comply was remedied, during a specified period thereafter.

(3) Regulations under this section may make different provision for different circumstances and for different descriptions of parking place, and may exempt specified descriptions of parking place from any provision of the regulations.

(4) In any proceedings for contravention of, or non-compliance with, an order under section 35(1) above relating to an off-street parking place, it shall be assumed, unless the contrary is shown, that any relevant regulations under this section were complied with at all material times."

Mr. Speaker: I have to inform the House that this amendment involves privilege.

9.43 am

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Leeds, North-East): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

After Report and Third Reading here, which was almost exactly three months ago, I did not expect that I should have to bring my Bill before the House again. I am, however, happy to do so this morning as a result of an amendment that was agreed in Committee in the other place. I fully agree with the amendment. It has my fullest support.

As it is some three months since we were last considering the Bill in this place, it is only fair to hon. Members, and to others, to tell them briefly about the important nature of this Bill. Throughout its passage, it has received a broad measure of all-party support. It is comparatively unusual for Bills, particularly of this type, to receive all-party support. I am therefore delighted that it has received the support of the other parties.

The important point about the Bill is that, until 1986, there were no vehicle parking provisions that permitted the use of any form of payment other than cash. On the surface, that appears to be most surprising. Many of the people to whom I have spoken while the Bill has been before both Houses have expressed considerable surprise about it. I suspect that it is just a legal anachronism. Many people have been greatly inconvenienced over the years when paying for parking their motor cars by the lack of flexibility in parking arrangements, particularly by local authorities. They believe that it should have been put right many years ago.

I pay credit to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), who successfully introduced a private Member's Bill in 1986 which is not all that dissimilar from the private Member's Bill for which I am responsible. It provided for parking equipment that was not operated by coins to be used, but unfortunately only on the street. It related mostly to the type of parking meters that we see on every street. It was a limited measure, not through any fault on the part of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North but because at that time he felt that it was a useful measure for which he felt he could obtain all-party support. It had a successful passage through the House and it has had limited success so far in one or two local authorities.

The only problem about the hon. Gentleman's Bill, which he perceived at the time that he introduced it, was that inevitably there would be difficulties in obtaining the confidence of manufacturers of parking equipment. It was clear that a small-scale scheme would not necessarily encourage them to manufacture equipment if the market for it would inevitably be limited. It was an inspired Bill and a useful piece of legislation, but it did not achieve enough.

When, therefore, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to introduce a private Member's Bill, I thought that it would be useful to build on what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North had done in 1986 by trying to broaden the scope for the use of such equipment so that it could be used for both off-street parking and on-street parking, thus ending up with a comprehensive piece of legislation in which both local authorities and the manufacturers of parking equipment could place their confidence.

I have already said that I am grateful for having received all-party support for the measure and for the fact that I am able to build on a measure that was introduced in 1986 by an Opposition Member. I am particularly pleased to be able to give full credit to him for what he began and for his own measure.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): Does that mean that once the Bill becomes law, assuming that it does, both on-street parking and off-street parking will be treated in exactly the same way? That would obviously be sensible.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I think that at this stage the hon. Gentleman is going beyond the scope of the Bill. I am sure that the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), who is in

charge of the Bill, will now deal with the Lords amendment. I understand that he has made his introductory remarks.

Mr. Kirkhope: Certainly, Madam Deputy Speaker. For my hon. Friend's information, though, that is correct.

The new clause, which is headed "Display of information" is an enabling provision. In itself it does not impose any new obligations. In that sense, it can be described as a free-standing clause. It would add a new section to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, but it would not affect any of the other clauses.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Does my hon. Friend share my disgust at the fact that not one single member of the SDP or the SLD is present in the Chamber? Does not that show that they do not care tuppence for the interests of motorists in Britain?

When my hon. Friend deals with the Lords amendment —which, as you rightly pointed out, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the only issue that we are debating today— could he tell me the reason for subsection (2)(c), which seeks to exempt local authorities in specified circumstances? I think that this amendment, passed by the other place, is excellent, but I cannot envisage why any local authority should be exempted from having to display the information that is mentioned in the Lords amendment.

Mr. Kirkhope: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention, and I shall come to subsection (2)(c) in due course. I am also sorry that no SLD or SDP Members are present, but in their defence I must stress that the Bill had all-party support and sponsorship.

The new clause does not impose new obligations. Its justification is strengthened by the fact that the Bill, if passed, will open the way for increasing use of new forms of off-street parking control, taking advantage of new technology and non-coin-operated systems. Inevitably there will be a much wider use of various systems, including payment by magnetic cards, vouchers and other means.

Obviously there are great attractions in that there will be less scope for fraud and theft and more cost-effective and efficient means of maintaining parking systems, moving away from the traditional coin-in-the-slot approach. The Bill will also encourage a great number of manufacturers to produce equipment using new technology. One leading contractor in Yorkshire, near Halifax, feels very strongly that there is considerable export potential in Europe and in other continents.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): My hon. Friend makes a very important point. Does he agree that there is potential for British manufacturers to increase the scope of the equipment that they produce and to export it to other countries? In regard to the signs that are the subject of the Lords amendment, some marvellous British manufacturers produce leisure signs, and they will benefit from the Bill. Does he further agree that there are lessons for the ordinary motorists? When they see the marvellous British equipment and signs, they might reflect that it would be better if they were driving marvellous British cars?

Mr. Kirkhope: My hon. Friend's last remark moved slightly away from the Lords amendment. I occasionally count the number of British cars in our car park at the House of Commons and I am reasonably encouraged that the vast majority, but sadly not all, are British. My hon. Friend is quite right that it is not just a question of the enormous export potential for metering equipment; as he says; there is also enormous export potential for the signs to which the amendment refers—exports which Britain needs. Britain has a large industry producing attractive and useful signs, so I am pleased to support my hon. Friend's point.

Motorists clearly need to be informed about the changes that might result from the new legislation. It is important that the consumer should have more information. We are living in a society which increasingly recognises the importance of consumers, and it makes sense that they should be provided with such information by right. The Lords amendment refers specifically to car parks which are under local authority order, so it refers primarily to the interests of local authorities served by the legislation, as they will be able to organise their car parking arrangements much better in future.

Mr. David Wilshire Spelthorne): My hon. Friend rightly draws the House's attention to the fact that the Bill will affect local authorities. Does he agree that there are just as many problems arising from lack of information or misleading information from private car park operators, especially from those who provide a field on occasional days?

Mr. Kirkhope: My hon. Friend is quite right. The Lords amendment and the Bill do not tackle that specific point. As the vast majority of car parking in Britain is provided by local authorities or is subject to local authority orders, they should be entitled to make their car parking arrangements as attractive as possible, and thereby I hope that they will make sure that, wherever possible, people will use local authority car parking. The Bill has received a very broad welcome, and the amendment has been welcomed by the local authorities that I have consulted. They feel strongly that they have been restricted in some ways in the provision of car parking spaces, and they would like more flexibility. The technology that they will be able to introduce will enable them to plan their parking much more around the facilities that the parking is there to assist.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Following the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) raised, what is the effect of the amendment on local authorities which provide car parks but decide to put them out to private tender? Obviously, we are moving in that direction, which I believe is right. I was once in control of parking in Kensington and Chelsea, as chairman of the works committee. I had to suffer many long and arduous public meetings at which people complained that there were simply not enough car parking spaces run by private companies or local authorities.

Mr. Kirkhope: I thank my hon. Friend for using the Chamber as a confessional this morning. He is right to say that the Bill does not related to independent private contractors, but it will apply to those who act as agents for local authorities in the supply of car parking. I am not sure of the latest statistics, but about 90 per cent. of off-street car parking in Britain is subject to local authority order. Therefore, the Bill refers to the vast majority of car parking arrangements. Inevitably, it will not cover everything, but it is designed to cover the majority of off-street parking.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I crave the House's indulgence; I have not been present throughout the debate as I have been busy on other pressing matters, which unfortunately have not been very fruitful.

I am intrigued by the structure of the amendment, and I need some help to understand it. Subsection (2)(a) requires

"the display of any orders under section 35(1) above relating to the parking place;"

while subsection (2)(c) would

"exempt local authorities, in specified circumstances or subject to specified conditions, from the requirement to display"

The amendment appears to require local authorities to display, and then to exempt them from displaying. The logic of that escapes me, as a simple-minded soul. Will the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), without the assistance of the Minister for Roads and Traffic, explain that to me?

Mr. Kirkhope: In each case, it is a question of "may". I shall move on to explain the precise details of the exemptions in due course. A few moments ago my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) raised a specific question about subsection (2)(c) and I said that I would deal with it. If the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) will bear with me for a little longer, I shall come to it in due course.

As I was saying, it is important to remember that local authorities are the largest collective providers of off-street parking. Undoubtedly there is still a need for further private sector development, but it is vital that local authorities are encouraged to provide facilities that are co-ordinated with the development of shopping centres and other places of attraction, particularly in our cities but, to a lesser but still important extent, in rural communities. There is a developing interest in tourism and, until now, local authorities have been somewhat reluctant to provide extra off-street car parking because of the difficulties that I have explained, such as fraud, theft from machines and other problems associated with car parking. The Bill will predominantly help in urban areas and will help local authorities in planning their parking provisions.

10 am

There is no statutory obligation on local authorities to display information on how car parks are managed. Other hon. Members have probably also experienced great frustration from time to time in the diversity of information in off-street car parks. It is extremely piecemeal. Information is very clearly displayed in some car parks, with a clear statement of how much it will cost to park, for how long, and the times of opening.

One may go to another city or town and find that the very information that one has come to rely on is no longer displayed. There may be absolutely no information displayed at the next car park.

Mr. Wilshire: Does my hon. Friend agree that that is probably another dreadful example of the gross incompetence and bad management of some local authorities, especially Labour-controlled ones?

Mr. Kirkhope: I am sorry to disagree with my hon. Friend, but I do not accept that there is any political difference in this matter. I accept that some car parks are well managed and that some are badly managed by local authorities, but I would not assume that the political persuasion of the council means that a car park is badly managed. Certain car parks in urban areas may be run better than others.

I am trying to help all local authorities. There was some surprise earlier that a Conservative member should want to do anything to help local authorities. That comment seemed to be rather odd. Conservative Members and the Government do a lot to help local authorities, although we do not always get appreciation for it—I wish that we did. Most support for my Bill has come from local authorities in the north of England, the area that I am proud to serve, and most of them have been Labour-controlled.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): The hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that he has had to bring forward his measure in a private Member's Bill. That is because some Conservative Members support and help local authorities, and his Government do not have the same record. The local authority in the area in which I live, Lewisham, manages car parks extremely well——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. No doubt the House will help all local authorities tremendously if we get back to the Lords amendment.

Mr. Kirkhope: I am grateful for the intervention by the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock). I do not demur in agreeing with her. I have already said that there is a wide diversity, and sometimes even a paucity, of information in off-street car parks. Unfortunately, a lot of it is not provided until one enters the car parks. The entrance to a car park is often down a dark tunnel, and, by the time one gets to the pay machine, there may be 20 or 30 cars behind one, sounding their horns as one tries to negotiate the ramps.

One then finds that the information that is provided, which is not substantial, is unacceptable. It may be unacceptable because the pricing structure is disgraceful or because one fundamentally disagrees with certain terms and conditions on the notice. One's vehicle may no longer be technically acceptable for the car park. It may be too long or too wide. Disabled people also have a problem. It is important to measure the number of spaces for them.

Mr. Greg Knight: I am here not to help local authorities, but to try to help the motorist. That is why many Conservative Members are present. I am rather heartened by my hon. Friend's remark. As I understand the Lords amendment, regulations could provide that information should be displayed not only inside the car park but perhaps at a point that can be seen from a public place—in other words, from the highway. Will my hon. Friend confirm my interpretation and that it will be possible to require that a list of parking charges be clearly visible from a highway?

Mr. Kirkhope: My hon. Friend is right in one way, but I said a few minutes ago that this is an enabling measure. It is not inevitable that that will occur. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister's powers will not need to be invoked. We are trying to obtain good practice so that we do not need to introduce anything further. When the legislation is in place, many local authorities that are not doing as well as Lewisham and one or two others will put their houses and car parks in order. I am sure that plenty of departmental assistance will be available for local authorities that wish to know what sort of information

could or should be supplied. I am sure that they will get a lot of co-operation and help, and that will be to the good of the motoring public.

I do not say that only local authorities will benefit. Clearly, we are concerned mainly about the motoring public and consumers, but the interests of local authorities can be consistent with those of the motoring public. Practice varies from one authority to another, or even from one car park to another under the control of the same local authority. Motorists would welcome more consistency in information. Some information should certainly be provided at car park entrances, so that a driver can choose whether he wishes to go into that car park. I hope that many of those things will come about anyway. That will be as a result either of a decision to operate good practice, or from pressure from users or users' organisations or consumer organisations which will realise the effects of this measure and how they can guide those who provide the facilities.

The important point about the amendment is that, if it is desirable, the Secretary of State could promote consistency of treatment by means of regulations. That would require the display of specified information. I emphasise that that is not the Secretary of State's desire or my desire. I like to see such things happening without the need for regulations. The public feel the same way. They would prefer to have a good voluntary code of practice rather than regulations, which undoubtedly have an unhelpful effect.

This measure applies only to those local authority off-street car parks under section 35 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. I emphasise that the aim is to provide a reserve power, but in answer to the hon. Member for Stockton, North, I stress that it is only a reserve power and would be used only if such measures proved to be necessary in due course.

Mr. Greg Knight: Assuming that we accept the amendment and the Bill is passed into law, who is to monitor whether local authorities are following the spirit of the Bill? How will we know whether my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will need to lay down regulations? We need some feedback. I hope that my hon. Friend will not say that he expects motorists to write in to complain, because we need something more organised than that.

Mr. Kirkhope: I am surprised to hear my hon. Friend's remarks. I do not know what he means by "organised". Does he mean that we should have a group of people snooping around car parks? I would not dream of describing motorists and consumers as "snoopers", but they are extremely interested parties and if they are "snooping" in the most favourable way and deciding that the way in which information is displayed is unacceptable to them, we are entitled to ask: who else is better equipped to complain or comment?

If the individual motorist does not want to complain himself or herself, there are plenty of organisations that serve motorists in this country that would do so. I am sure that the Royal Automobile Club, the Automobile Association and the Consumers Association would be most interested in that. I am also sure that the pressures that they can bring to bear would be far more effective than the official organised snooping that my hon. Friend suggests.

Mr. Wilshire: My hon. Friend is being a little over-sensitive to the suggestion that consumers should check up on things. One of the best ways of getting a rotten service from a trader or a supplier of a service is to take bad service lying down and not to complain. We need not be in the least bit defensive about saying that consumers should complain if they receive bad service.

Mr. Kirkhope: I would not argue with my hon. Friend on that point. It is a fair comment, but I do not feel that I am being over-sensitive. I am simply expressing the views of many people in this country. I am trying to put things right for them and am seeking to do so in a way which is as uncontroversial, and I hope as useful, as possible.

Subsection (2) covers the additional matters which may be provided for in the regulations. For example, regulations may require the display of the order made by the local authority under the provisions governing the use of the car park.

When one enters a park or takes children to play on the swings in a recreation ground, in all likelihood one will see the byelaws relating to the operation of that park or recreation ground prominently displayed on a large board. Perhaps the main provisions of the car parks orders could be displayed in a comparable manner.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I have been listening to my hon. Friend with interest. Has he ever seen anybody reading the byelaws so prominently displayed? They are often in such tiny print; on such large and intimidating boards and written in such total gobbledegook that nobody can read them—certainly not in the open air, with the rain coming down—so how could such boards be read if they were at the entrance to a car park where the motorist will encounter cars queueing behind, with other drivers tooting and trying to get their tickets?

10.15 am

Mr. Kirkhope: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. I have often seen lawyers reading such notices. As my hon. Friend and I were both of that persuasion before we came to this place, I am sure that we both read such notices avidly. Indeed, it does not really matter whether one is a lawyer or not——

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Is not the real problem the fact that such gobbledegook was probably written by people such as my hon. Friends the Members for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) and for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot)?

Mr. Kirkhope: That may well be the case. However, I am glad that we have moved away from the basis of the charge being by way of the number of folios, because that will undoubtedly reduce the length of such information in the future.

My hon. Friend has beaten me to my next point. I was about to say that the display of such information should not take us away from the crusade for plain English, which is so important. I referred to the need for plain English earlier in the passage of the Bill and emphasised the importance of making sure that everything that we write is in plain English. There is no point in something that people cannot understand. Part of the responsibility for the way in which something is written rests with the legislator but the responsibility also lies partly with those who display the information. They must ensure that the

[Mr. Kirkhope]

way in which it is displayed, on a board or on an illuminated sign, is sufficiently attractive to ensure that people will read it and that they will be able to understand it.

The regulations by the Secretary of State could also specify the manner in which the information is to be displayed and could stipulate the location of any such board or display. Motorists should be given adequate information either as or before they enter the car park. I should prefer it to be before. That would at least ensure that motorists will know which vehicles are permitted.

That reminds me of the famous case about the Mount Charlotte Hotels, which other hon. Members who are lawyers will almost certainly remember. That case established that, on checking into an hotel one should be able to see displayed on the counter or reception desk the conditions or provisions governing one's stay in that hotel, before one signs the register to book in. At that point, one is entering a contract with the hotel about the provision of accommodation and food. If one wants to argue about the conditions, one must do so before contracting with the hotel. Therefore, a hotel is obliged to provide that information as near to the entrance or to the start of one's contract with the hotel as possible.

It is only reasonable that similar provisions should apply to off-street car parks. I see no reason why a motorist should find out too late that the car park is unacceptable to him in some way.

The information to be displayed should also include details of whether season tickets apply, and should give the scale of charges. I refer again to the powers of local authorities, because several local authorities in the north have told me that they would very much welcome the sort of technology that would allow them to alter the pricing structures of their car parks, dependent upon the day of the week or the time of day. That would enable them to assist those who provide shopping facilities and to encourage people into the centres of towns, which are often deserted at certain times of the day, by offering a lower pricing structure at those times, but a higher pricing structure at the periods when people might want to park their cars for commercial and business purposes. It is felt that people should pay more for on-peak rather than off-peak time.

The technology can be monitored and operated in such a way that those changes can be made, and given that the local authorities have that flexibility, it is important to ensure that the motorist knows that those provisions apply. It would be most unfair if one arrived at a car park at 11 am one day and was charged 50p an hour, but returned on another day at 8.30 am to find, only after one had entered the car park, that the charge at that time was £2 per hour. Because of the impact that the Bill will have, it is even more important that that flexibility, which the local authorities welcome, should be notified to the motorist before he or she enters the car park.

Mr. Wilshire: My hon. Friend is right to say that the siting of the information is crucial. Unfortunately, I am not a lawyer, so will he confirm that where subsection 2(b) specifies the manner of display, "manner" to a lawyer means the location as well as the content and the size?

Mr. Kirkhope: I would certainly interpret it in that way. Certainly that is what is meant to be implied by it. I hope that other lawyers will agree with that opinion.

These measures are especially important where barrier systems operate, because once one is under a barrier and the barrier closes there is no retreat. One is stuck. The only way out of the car park is then along the route which takes one to the checkout.

Mr. Greg Knight: My hon. Friend has now mentioned an important point, because some car parks put their conditions under which one can park one's car on the ticket that is dispensed. When one takes the ticket from the machine, the barrier lifts up. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that it is unreasonable to expect a motorist in a queue of traffic to stop at the barrier to read the information on the ticket before he drives under that barrier. Will my hon. Friend assure us that he proposes that this information will be displayed not only on tickets, but on signs that can be seen from a distance?

Mr. Kirkhope: I thank my hon. Friend for making that point. It confirms what I have already said. It is an important point and is part of that with which we are trying to deal.

Subsection (2)(c) provides for the exemptions which the hon. Member for Stockton, North mentioned; I hope that he will be returning to the Chamber shortly. It is important to allow any regulatory regime to be tailored to meet the main objectives and not to apply regardless. There must be flexibility in the system. For instance, it would be fair to say that it may be difficult for very small car parks, which just come under local authority orders or, importantly, seasonal car parks which are there only for a temporary period, but are subject to a local authority order—such as Christmas car parks—to display the information in the form in which we would like to see it. I believe, therefore, that it makes a lot of sense to have exemptions in such circumstances, because they would provide a considerable amount of flexibility.

There have been many press reports recently about the problems of specific groups of people with upper limb disabilities. I must admit that the Bill is almost coincidental. Sadly, it was not designed primarily to help such people, but it just happens that it will help such disabled people considerably. Obviously such new systems of payment as are proposed—such as magnetic cards or vouchers—would be more convenient for disabled drivers, especially those with dexterity problems, for example, thalidomide victims. However, those are only the tip of the iceberg of people who have such problems.

I have heard from organisations representing the interests of such groups that some disabled people have considerable problems in handling coins, so they will welcome what we are trying to do. They will welcome, too, the fact that much information will be provided on the information boards about the number of disabled parking places available, the location of those places in the building and any other provisions which are designed to help them. It will tell them, for example, where ramps are located so that, once they have parked, they will have easy exit from the building, which will be useful to them.

We understand that more than 1 million British adults have difficulty in reaching and stretching. Indeed, nearly 2 million—certainly 1·75 million—have problems with dexterity in their upper limbs. I know that manufacturers

and designers of such equipment are well aware of the needs of people who are not able-bodied. I hope that they will ensure that they install equipment which is most helpful to them. Certainly, disabled people could be helped by the amendment from the other place.

The amendment will also give the Secretary of State the power to require local authorities, if necessary, to display information for those who are disabled. I hope that those powers will be taken up by the Secretary of State, if necessary, but that in the meantime they will be implemented as good practice by local authorities, having been given the encouragement.

Ms. Ruddock: I welcome what the hon. Gentleman has said and the help that the amendment could give to people with disabilities of the kind that he has outlined. I hope, however, that the provision will be for free passes for the car parks and that he is not suggesting that such people should merely be given the facility to pay through a different means.

Mr. Kirkhope: That is outside the scope of the Lords amendment, so I cannot really go into it. However, I would say that the delivery of the plastic card for parking purposes does not imply either that the card has had to be bought for cash or that it was provided under some scheme. The hon. Lady has hit on a point with which I would like to deal. The joy of a plastic card is that a disabled person does not have to handle cash, and the card could be provided to them under a scheme which gives them the security of being able to park in a place which has been well designed to deal with their problems. The hon. Lady raised a good point, and I hope that I have dealt with it adequately.

It is important that a mechanism is provided to secure compliance with any regulations. Paragraph (d) provides for that compliance in an ingenious but nevertheless, important manner. The failure of local authorities to comply with any future regulations would render the car park order of no effect in so far as it placed an obligation on the consumer or the motorist to pay a charge. That is not exactly dynamite, but it is the sort of provision that will hasten or help along the implementation of a good code of practice. It would certainly be used only in an extreme case. However, it is important for the consumer and the motorist that it is in place. Therefore, in order to protect the car park revenue and the enforcement of their charges, it would be in the local authorities' interests to see that any regulations displayed are properly observed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North asked on whom the onus would be to show anything other than good practice. It is right that that onus should be on the user, and that will be well reflected by the user or his consumer or motorist organsation.

Further provision is made in subsection (3) to allow for the exemption altogether of specified types of car parks from the application of the reglations, or their exemption in specified circumstances. The intention is to provide a framework which can be fine tuned to any set of circumstances. We had difficulty interpreting how new technology would be used. It is difficult to be precise about what will happen to car parking devices in the future, so, the legislation has been prepared in such a way that it will allow great flexibility for that new technology when it comes aong, without the need to burden this place with further legislation. After all, one of our interests is to keep legislation to a minimum; clearly we are doing so in allowing that flexibility within the Bill.

In the Lords, the Government clearly indicated that they had no immediate intention to make any regulations. I hope that the Minister will refer to that point and confirm what I have been saying. It is important to underline that fact.

The new clause acknowledges the reasonable expectations of car park users to be properly informed about the arrangements governing the use of car parks and about their obligations. I can see no good reason for anyone to oppose that principle. The new clause enhances what I have always said is a modest measure, where there are no losers, only gainers. The Lords amendment is an eminently sensible and valuable addition to my short, but I hope practical, Bill. With those few words, I invite the House to give its approval.

10.30 am

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I am sure that the practical and concise speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) will have destroyed any potential opposition to the Lords amendment. As was pointed out, if the Social and Liberal Democrats are content not to be here, the burden can be carried by the Labour and Tory parties.

There is good co-operation between local authorities and central Government on this matter. No local authority has written to the Government opposing the extra powers in the Lords amendment. I give an assurance that the Secretary of State hopes never to have to use them. It is far better to have voluntary acceptance of a standard of information to provide necessary help to all people.

If the House wishes, I can deal with some of the points in more detail. As my hon. Friend made clear and as I am sure is acknowledged by the presence on the Opposition Front Bench of both the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) and by the keen interest of my hon. Friends on the Back Benches, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown), the provision of information can help those who have difficulty using car parks. That brings me to the point raised during business questions yesterday by the right hon. Members for Wythenshawe and for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley).

I shall relate all my remarks to the provision of information and the Lords amendment. Most of us obtain our information not from notices outside or inside off-street car parks, but from newspapers and television. I pay tribute to *The Sunday Times* which fought for thalidomide victims in a long campaign, at great cost. The journalists involved showed great bravery. The outcome shows that a persistent campaign of being reasonable and sometimes unreasonable can occasionally bring great advantage to those in great need. Many other groups will follow that example and benefit from reasonable, and unreasonable, campaigning.

The hon. Member for Deptford asked whether free provision would be made and whether cash needed to change hands. I regret that *The Sunday Times* did not cover our consultation document published in 1986 about whether orange badges should be extended to the upper limbless. Perhaps it did not feel that it was newsworthy. An

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

article two weeks ago managed to suggest, or was sub-edited to suggest, that in 1986 the Government withdrew the opportunity for the upper limbless to have orange badges. The truth is completely the reverse. I am not accusing *The Sunday Times* of lying. I do not wish to use strong language or to have a war with it, ITN, the *Evening Standard*, the Thalidomide Trust or Mr. Gordon Piller. I simply want to set out the information openly.

In 1986, the Department of Transport, with my approval, asked whether the upper limbless should be included in the orange badge scheme. There were hundreds of responses. In April this year, we announced the conclusions. The predominant, strong advice and the recommendations of the statutory committee, the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, was that the scheme should not be extended to the upper limbless or those who are unable to carry. The reason is not in any way to target Thalidomide people as being not disabled or deserving. Some Thalidomide people already have orange badges. Others do not want them. At least one, and probably others, did have one but did not get it renewed.

The media have a responsibility to declare facts as well as the right, which I acknowledge, to put forward opinions and to campaign. It does no good to run a campaign to double the number of orange badges from 1 million to 2 million, which, together, ITN, *The Sunday Times* and the *Evening Standard* could do. The *Evening Standard* editorial stated that it would not matter whether there were 2 million instead of 1 million, but that would destroy the magnificent achievement of the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe, who managed to introduce the national scheme.

When we consider information displayed outside off-street car parks in local authority hands, we are talking not only about local schemes but about the national scheme. The right hon. Gentleman introduced the national scheme and provided information not just outside car parks but on cars—the national orange badge scheme. I have with me the proposed variant which will introduce other improvements. It is relevant to see whether people who use information in off-street car parks are entitled to any concessions that the orange badge may bring.

The national scheme was introduced to avoid disabled people having their front windscreens covered with four, 14 or 40 local badges. The House approved the right hon. Gentleman's suggestion. It was a breakthrough. As the 1975 regulations made plain, it was designed for those who could not walk an appreciable distance without great difficulty. In 1982, following consultations, the House approved regulations which did not make a material difference to those criteria.

The scheme has run from its conception, through its inception, through the review in 1982—the regulations came into effect in 1983—without change. I regret that the coverage of the consultations which started in 1986 and the announcement of the Government's preliminary conclusions were ignored by most of the media. They were not ignored by the disability organisations. The joint committee and the statutory committee both gave clear advice to the Government.

After we announced the conclusions, we held a press conference at the Department of Transport. We then came here for an immediate meeting with the all-party parliamentary committee on the disabled, which spans both Houses. It took two members of the statutory committee about 35 minutes to get from the Department of Transport to the House of Commons. That illustrated the problem that people in wheelchairs and others with disabilities have in moving about.

As the chairman of the statutory committee said in a letter to *The Sunday Times*, there are two further problems, among many. One is how to pay for parking. Alison Wright, whose case has been mentioned in the media, is disabled and I hope that she will not mind my using her name. An ITN news item which I did not see would have illustrated the problem, judging from the response of the editor of the *Evening Standard*. The second problem is shopping. Neither problem is necessarily solved by the orange badge in itself. It is difficult for those whose arms do not work effectively and for those who do not have arms, for reasons including Thalidomide, to carry shopping.

Most people would accept that it would be immoral to extend the qualifications of the regulations just to people who are Thalidomide vicitms, unless their level of disability is greater than that of those who otherwise would be excluded from the scheme. It is important to use the figures with great caution. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys has estimated that more than 1 million people have significant practical difficulty in carrying shopping. I do not argue that all those people would necessarily want an orange badge. If we start using the ability to carry shopping as one of the criteria for issuing an orange badge, we will not be limiting the number of orange badges in circulation, although there are no quotas or targets, but extending it dramatically.

We have sufficient evidence to suggest that local authorities are creating more and more no-loading areas. Often, the implicit reason for that is to exclude orange badge holders from using the side of the road in such areas. Local schemes for the disabled driver are also increasing. During last week's transport strike, I walked through Kensington and Chelsea, where I saw the Kensington and Chelsea blue badge. That might entitle the user of that badge to free parking in a Kensington and Chelsea off-street car park. The information might be on the board of its car parks for the benefit of disabled people.

One can imagine, however, reaching the situation whereby a disabled person not only has to apply for such a blue sticker in advance, but may end up with a green one for one area, a red one for another, one with black vertical stripes for another or one with horizontal blue stripes for yet another area. We would return to a terrible proliferation of such badges and schemes, and the effect would be to exclude various people from parking. It would be like having a sign at off-street and on-street car parks saying, "Disabled persons not wanted here". If that happened, the no-go area and apartheid system against which the most severely mobility disabled handicapped people argue against would be created.

Let me make it absolutely plain, that the Department of Transport recognises that Alison Wright and other such people are disabled. Those who were able to attend the tremendous mobility road show at Crowthorne in Berkshire at the transport and road research laboratory, where 20,000 people, most of them disabled, came together, will recognise that the Department is keenly

interested in working successfully with local authorities, the private sector and the disability organisations to overcome the problems of disability wherever possible.

The Department has a good record. Although I have done a great deal to support the work undertaken, that good record is not particularly mine. It is a good record because of the way in which the matter has been treated as a non-party, non-personality issue. Great credit goes to many involved, but some of the greatest credit goes to the former permanent secretary at the Department of Transport, Sir Peter Baldwin.

During the International Year of the Disabled, Sir Peter asked what could be done to help disabled people meet their transport needs. Once one can help a disabled person overcome his transport difficulties, one is helping him in every other way.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Bottomley: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman agrees.

Transport is the key to overcoming most of the disablement in life that disablement of the body or the mind brings about.

The person who listened to Sir Peter Baldwin ask that question was his private secretary, Ann Frye. Although it is not the convention to mention the name of an individual civil servant people will recognise that her service to the disabled community, to the Department and to the voluntary organisations as head of the disability unit in the Department has been unusual in its dedication and unusual in its success. That success has mostly been achieved through partnership. I intend to continue such partnership.

Independent Television News has suggested, perhaps because it did not have enough time to consider it, that orange badges will now only be given to people with serious walking disabilities. Such a suggestion is no doubt an unintentional mistake. Those with serious walking disabilities who get the concession of the orange badge in off-street car parks where the relevant information is available know that they have always been entitled to that badge. It was suggested that the concession on the board at such car parks should be extended and that the numbers of those eligible under the national scheme should be increased. The ITN report also suggested that officials at the Department do not recognise that a particular person is disabled. That is a great insult to civil servants who know as much about this as most, and more than many.

It would be better if those who want to do programmes on the disabled consulted the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe. Although we do not agree on every point, we recognise that all are bona fide in their attempts to make progress. We also recognise the care, consideration and hard work that officials at the Department and local authority officials undertake in trying to overcome the problems of the disabled.

In the transcript from ITN, Alison Wright is quoted as saying that she is not talking about going out shopping, but about operating ticket machines in car parks. In that connection, it is important to consider what information is available on the board at car parks and whether that information could make it plain that someone with a disability, whether upper arm or some other, could use that car park. It is no good finding oneself in a car park and then discovering that it is not possible to use it. Such information would be covered by the Lords amendment if the local authority operating the off-street car park did not provide that information voluntarily. I expect that all local authorities will want to provide such information.

Alison Wright asked how she was expected to get up to the machine, put the money in and get her ticket out. She said that the ticket machines used to be fairly high off the ground. I am sure the reason why those machines are now coming down is the work of those concerned to make life easier for the disabled. I do not want to get into a war with Alison Wright's father, so I shall leave out some of the comments he made. The question and answer sheet that has been made available to all hon. Members makes it plain that we are taking further medical advice on the assertion of Mr. Gordon Piller that Thalidomide victims have difficulty in walking—not when shopping or leaning down. That is a new claim and we are discussing it with the medical profession and the Thalidomide Trust.

10.45 am

Mr. Alfred Morris: Will Professor Smithells of Leeds be involved in that consultation? He had much to do with the medical advice given in the early 1970s when we were campaigning for adequate compensation for the Thalidomide victims. He is a man of considerable experience.

Mr. Bottomley: That is a sensible suggestion. Together with the Thalidomide Trust and the medical experts, we shall find a way in which to make an assessment without requiring every Thalidomide person to undergo a new medical assessment. I agree with Mr. Gordon Piller that it would be wrong to say that one particular group should be subjected to a medical assessment every five minutes every time Parliament is discussing the issue. It is important to accept expert medical advice, and I acknowledge what the right hon. Gentleman has said.

As the assessment about Thalidomide people's difficulty in walking was known in the 1970s, if it had been relevant to the entitlement to the orange badge concession, which might be illustrated in the information at the entrance to an off-street car park, it would have been specifically built in to the criteria for issuing orange badges in 1975 or in 1982. That suggests that the solution is not as simple as *The Sunday Times*, the *Evening Standard* or ITN may have suggested.

If I had the power to write to someone to say that someone else should be given an orange badge, I would have done so. I have been in my job for three and a half years and I have never issued or withdrawn an orange badge. I have never instructed that a particular person should not have an orange badge. If that had been made plain by the media earlier on we could have had a more helpful discussion. If any one person wants to expand the criteria, it is better that it is done in such a way that it is outside the full glare of publicity. It is better to discuss the principles and to use illustrative examples rather than focusing on one particular person with a problem and on one person who may be thwarted in what is seen as an uncaring and unthinking way. I have no doubt that one of my friends in the media will now say that the Minister has described himself as "uncaring and unthinking".

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East has done well in extending the provisions set out by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara)

[Mr. Bottomley]

to deal with on-street car parking. We must continue to solve the problems of the disabled. That does not mean merely providing information on car park boards, but looking at issues in a different way. I am sure that we will soon decide that the idea of putting cash into meters is ludicrous; it is caveman stuff. It would be far better to use a stored value smart card that loses value with use. That would make life very simple for those using parking facilities.

I hope that the media will help in putting across the important issues and will help to explain that it is important that, over the past five years, the number of orange badges has gone up from 600,000 to more than 1 million. At the present rate the number of orange badges will increase to 2 million within the next five years. It is important to bring those numbers down so that those who have the orange badges are clearly identified as those with the most severe mobility—walking or moving—handicap.

We want to solve the problem faced by disabled people when shopping and trying to put money into meters, whether off-street or on-street. We also want to try to solve the problem that they face when driving cars. I expect to see more people being legitimately entitled to orange badges—for example, more elderly people driving and more people receiving the mobility allowance. Those are the sort of points which my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East and others have been putting forward.

We do not give the greatest help to those in greatest need by giving a small amount of help to those with a recognised, but lesser or different, need. We must work across the spectrum, and I pay tribute to the general work of the all-party committee for the help which it gives. I hope that today's debate, while persuading hon. Members to accept the Lords amendment, which is a sensible one, will also illustrate some of the issues. If we can persuade more of the media to cover all the issues related to disability and the ways in which problems can be overcome, we shall move forward in a far more useful way than we shall if the sort of ludicrous and partial coverage —which may be necessary in the competitive press of today, but does not help those with disabilities— continues. We are trying to cut the number of casualties and disabilities—which is what road casualty reduction is about—and I look forward with interest to see what the killed and serious injury rate is when the next figures come out. Quiet, undramatic banging away, never letting go and fighting for a client group is what lobbying and campaigning is about. That is honourable work for newspapers, Members of Parliament and Government Members.

Mr. Alfred Morris: In relation to the Lords amendment on the display of information, I want to ask whether the regulations made by the Secretary of State will include information relating to disabled people or make special provision for them. In particular, I want very briefly to raise, as the Minister has done, the predicament of people with no arms, including many Thalidomide victims, which arises from their exclusion from the orange badge scheme of parking concessions for disabled people. The scheme is one which, as the Minister recalled, I introduced as a private Member in my Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. I must emphasise that I did so with all-party support in both Houses of Parliament.

There has been widespread publicity about the cases of people who are upper limbless and strong public support for their inclusion in the scheme. Their predicament, and often humiliation, is due to their inability to feed parking meters and, if they are trying to carry shopping, they face further intimidating difficulties as severely disabled people. In any case, the mobility of people without arms is often held to be restricted by loss of balance in walking. That, I trust, will be one of the issues which the Minister will be trying to tackle in his consultation with medical advisers.

Some people with no upper limbs who are now excluded were in the scheme until recently. They were excluded at a time of growing concern about the considerable increase in the number of beneficiaries of the scheme who now exceed 1 million and, some will say, they were excluded because of the abuse of the scheme by people who do not need the very important benefits it confers.

The answer to that problem is, of course, that we should deal with abuse by tackling the abusers, if necessary by increasing the penalty for abuse, instead of piling handicap on handicap by excluding some very needful people from the scheme. For my part, I would rather lock up serious abusers of the scheme than lock up severely disabled people in their own homes. Any relevance which the Lords amendment can be made to have to this problem will be widely welcomed, more especially if it can provide any amelioration of the problems of people with no upper limbs for whom parking concessions can often mean all the difference between living a normal life and becoming heavily dependent on other people, even between becoming a taxpayer and staying at home on social security.

If the Lords amendment can help in any way to solve the problems of disabled people, there will be considerable relief among the Thalidomide victims and other disabled people who feel wrongly excluded from the scheme. I shall be grateful if the Minister will address the problem in the days ahead. He has my assurance that I fully appreciate the difficulties of ensuring that the scheme is strictly limited to those who need the benefits it gives. The Minister knows of my concern about those difficulties and their crucial importance to people who cannot walk. I urge him to offer some hope to those who are now asking this House for its help.

Mr. Greg Knight: I broadly support the Lords amendment. The reason I do so has nothing to do with whether I feel it will be helpful to local authorities, but because I believe that it will safeguard the interests of the consumer and be good news for the motorist.

As I read the Lords amendment, it will empower the Secretary of State to make regulations to require that signs are displayed which not only show the cost of parking in a particular car park, but will ensure that the sign states whether the car park is open or closed, its hours of opening, the penalties for not purchasing a ticket, the cost differentials at different times of the day or days of the week, and the general conditions of use. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) has not entirely laid to rest all my concerns on the matter. I have a number of questions which I hope that he will answer when he sums up. I noticed that the Members of the other place, in welcoming and supporting the new clause, said that they thought that it would be a good idea to have a sort of British standard so that every car park in

the country would display a sign of similar size, containing similar information. That is an excellent idea, but no mention was made of whether we would be likely to run into difficulty with our friends in Europe.

Hon. Members may well recall that we ran into difficulty a few weeks ago about the size of health warnings on cigarette packets. The European Commission thought that it was competent—and, unfortunately, it appears that it was—to start laying regulations about the size of warnings on cigarette packets in this country.

Will we find that we spend time debating this issue and my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East listens to the views expressed from both sides of the House, only to find that, at the end of the day, some bureaucrat in Europe has an idea that we should have bright pink car park signs of a certain design, and all our efforts on this Bill have come to naught? Therefore, can my hon. Friend assure the House that the Bill will not fall foul of any pending legislation before the European Commission? It would be too much if Europe interfered in this matter, and the question should be answered today.

As I read it, the new clause could be construed as saying that the regulations could deal with the language to be used on these signs. Does my hon. Friend think that some local authorities may feel it appropriate to display the information not only in English, but Urdu or some other language. I understand that, only this week, my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East had difficulty with a French motorist in London who parked in front of his garage and refused to move his car. There may well be a case in tourist areas for car park signs to be written in European languages as well.

Mr. Kirkhope: My hon. Friend has failed to say that I had 100 per cent. success in dealing with the matter by simply writing in French a notice politely requesting them to go away.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. That probably qualifies as a personal statement and we may want to remind hon. Members who have not been in the House for long that it is not right to question people on a personal statement of that sort.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I do not think that that is a point of order to which I need respond.

Mr. Knight: The House will admire the ingenuity of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East in getting rid of the unwelcome motorist in the way that he did.

Mr. Kirkhope: I did not write the notice. It was written by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) who is better at French than I am.

11 am

Mr. Knight: I am sure that the House is grateful for that explanation.

Although I have raised the lighter side, it is a valid point. If one visits certain parts of the country, one is immediately struck by the predominance of tourists. That is particularly so in London, but it is also the case in Stratford-upon-Avon and other parts of Britain. Therefore, there is a case for dealing in the regulations with those tourist areas. I should like some assurance that if it were felt necessary by a local authority to display the car park signs in other languages as well as English, it would be able to do so under the scope of the new clause.

Mr. Frank Cook: In view of 1992, it might be sensible to make that sort of provision. It seems eminently sensible.

Mr. Knight: That is a valid point. I hope that the day is no too far off—perhaps the next century—when all the people in the world can speak English. In the meantime, we need to make provision so that the motorist, whatever his native language, is able to see where to park. This makes sense because one does not want to find the roads in tourist areas cluttered with the cars of motorists who are here for only a short stay and do not know where the car parks are and cannot find out because they cannot read the signs.

Mr. Wilshire: I thought that my hon. Friend was putting together two thoughts which do not work. He was saying that whatever language a driver speaks he should be able to see where to park but if we follow that argument, it may be impossible to see where to park because the signs would be so big.

Mr. Knight: I understand my hon. Friend's point. I am not suggesting that in every area we should have a plethora of signs in different languages. However, a case could be made out in tourist areas for allowing an alternative language to be displayed. I would be interested to hear the response of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East.

I was somewhat taken aback when my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East said that he was not sure that the regulations would be made and that they would be a sword of Damocles hanging over local authorities—if they behave themselves and put up signs, he did not think that the Bill would need to be implemented. I think that was what he said. I disagree with him. If we accept the Lords amendment and the Bill passes into law, we should enact the Bill and the regulations to see that there is uniformity throughout Britain.

I do not think that our poor, long-suffering motorists should be encouraged to monitor the signs displayed at car parks and to have to complain to their Members of Parliament if they feel that an appropriate sign is not erected. I will be telling my constituents that if they feel that there is a problem in Derby, they should write to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East. If that is his view, he should be responsible for collecting motorists' complaints.

I have a couple of legal queries for my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East. Subsection (2)(c) of the Lords amendment to which I referred earlier, exempts local authorities in specified circumstances from having to comply with the regulations. I was delighted to hear my hon. Friend give two examples of that. He said that perhaps seasonal or small car parks would be exempted. Can he give me an assurance that he does not see those exemptions being applied selectively and exempting car parks operated by some local authorities? If the Bill means anything, it has to be applied uniformly across Britain. I accept that there may be a case for exempting a small car park or a car park on a temporary site, but I hope that local authorities will not apply for an en bloc exemption in their area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My hon. Friend, with whom I usually agree on Fridays—I accept that this is a minority interest subject, like the protection of the freedom of the press—must be a lawyer. He is suggesting that my right

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

hon. Friend the Secretary of State wants to get at as many local authorities as possible. That is very un-Conservative. My right hon. Friend does not want to intervene but needs the power to do so in case it is necessary. If he feels that it is necessary to intervene, he will want to do so in a limited way so that if he selects a certain class, he can exempt some within it. The idea that it is all for one and one for all and that there can be nothing out of the ordinary is one which I hope does not get back to my hon. Friend's constituents.

Mr. Knight: Perhaps my views on this matter are coloured by the fact that I have to live with Labour-controlled Derbyshire county council, which is one of the most unreasonable and badly run councils in Britain.

Mr. Kirkhope: Both my hon. Friend and I are solicitors, but I hope that he is not trying to give the impression that we all think the same on this issue. Clearly, our remarks and interpretations are different. It shows that within the legal profession there is almost inevitably a diversity in the way we present cases.

Mr. Knight: I prefaced my remarks by saying that I broadly supported my hon. Friend's Bill and the Lords amendment to it. I hope that my hon. Friend will appreciate that some of my remarks now are couched in the interrogative. I hope that when he replies to the debate he will give me some reassurance on those points.

My hon. Friend touched too briefly on the question of burden of proof, which is covered in subsection (4) of the Lords amendment. To paraphrase my hon. Friend, he said that the burden of proof will be on the motorist and that that is as it should be. I part company with him there. If the local authority is seeking to prosecute or obtain a fee from the motorist, the duty should be on that authority to show that it has complied with the regulations laid down under the Bill.

If I can give an example, I may take my hon. Friend with me on this point. Let us imagine a motorist who parks in an off-street car park where the sign displaying the regulations and terms of parking is not present, perhaps because it has blown down or vandals have removed it. He may omit to buy a ticket from a machine which is perhaps on another floor of the car park and a week later receives a letter from the local authority demanding payment of the fee or an excess penalty. He would be shocked because he did not see any sign. On his return to the car park he may find that the local authority has reinstated the sign. What possible defence could he have if proceedings were brought in those circumstances?

If the duty were on the local authority, it would be easy for it to inquire of the car park attendant, or the person whose duty it is to see that everything is in order, whether the sign was erected at 9 am on a particular day and whether it was still there at 5 pm. The burden of proof should be with the local authority. I can see circumstances arising in which a motorist does not obey the regulations because a sign may have disappeared, but in the meantime a local authority can re-erect the sign and the motorist would have no defence.

Mr. Kirkhope: I must correct my hon. Friend. I do not think that I referred to the burden of proof. If there needs to be a burden of proof, it will be within litigation or within the relationship between the user and supplier. I said that the responsibility for the need to display a sign or to make a cause should be on the user, not the provider of the parking space.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am sure that my hon. Friend will find new section 35B(4) of relevance. It says:

"it shall be assumed, unless the contrary is shown, that any relevant regulations under this section were complied with at all material times."

Mr. Knight: That is the part of the Lords amendment with which I am having difficulty, because I feel that it is unreasonable. When a local authority is pursuing a motorist for disobeying regulations relating to a car park, the onus should be on it to show that the driver had seen, or should have seen, the notice advising him of the correct course of action to take.

I appreciate the difficulty that my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East has. Last year I wished to move an amendment to the Licensing (Amendment) Act 1988 which was altered in the other place in a way with which I was not entirely happy. However, we do not have a procedure to tamper with a Lords amendment. We have to accept or reject it in toto. Therefore, although I am unhappy about this part of the amendment, I appreciate that my hon. Friend cannot take on board today the points that I have raised.

I only hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, when he formulates the regulations, will give serious thought to the wording of them, so that the motorist is not placed in an unjustified and difficult position when, for example, a sign has gone missing, and he does not follow the regulations of the park correctly. Although I have some doubts about the wording of the amendment, it is clearly designed to safeguard the interests of the consumer. As that is the overriding principle behind it, with some reservations I support it.

Ms. Ruddock: On behalf of the Opposition I welcome this amendment, as we welcome the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope). This is a modest measure, which allows charging by magnetic cards or vouchers in off-street car parks, and thus increases choice and flexibility in the provision by local authorities of car parking. The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 enabled local authorities to designate parking places on highways and to provide car parks. They remain the largest providers of off-street parking. In 1986, my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) introduced a private Member's Bill allowing non-coin operating equipment on the streets. We are pleased today to be able to extend the support that we gave that Bill to this important measure, which allows off-street parking to be similarly operated. However, we are surprised that the Government did not find time for such a simple measure, and left it to be introduced through the private Member's Bill procedure.

The new amendment will allow the Secretary of State to make regulations requiring local authorities to display the proper information at car parks—for example through signs with information about methods of payment, about which we have heard this morning. As the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East has explained, the amendment is an enabling one and it is our hope that the regulations may not have to be brought in but that there will be a voluntary

code instead. However, if there is no voluntary code, we hope that the Minister will act speedily because it is our belief—as it is clearly the belief of many hon. Members—that the standard of information displayed at car parks is not high enough. We hope that there will be a better display, that there will be consistency in display, and that the information will be displayed outside car parks to enable people to make a proper choice and to know precisely what their options are when deciding whether to enter the car park. We also hope to see a major effort made to display information that is helpful to people with disabilities.

As the Minister spent so much time dealing with the orange badge scheme, I shall make a few comments about that. The onus is now strongly on the Minister to respond to the points made so constructively by my right hon. Frind the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), the author of the original scheme. I share the Minister's concern about congestion on our roads and about the difficulties caused by the large number of vehicles coming into the centres of our towns and needing places to park. However, I cannot believe that it would add to those problems if we were to admit 150 upper limbless Thalidomide victims to the orange badge scheme. We are disturbed to know that the Minister judges these matters on the criterion of numbers. Decisions to be made concerning disabled people should be made on the basis of their need, not on the overall numbers who might be admitted to the scheme.

11.15 am

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I appreciate that the hon. Lady may not have been able to be present at the meetings of the joint all-party disablement committee and I hope to make more information available because it is important that both sides of the House understand this matter. Whatever decision is made on the regulations, the only role that I have is in proposing regulations to the House. The only regulations that we have are those which were proposed to the House by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). I repeat that the 1975 regulations, abbreviated in 1982, are the provisions that the Department put out to consultation in 1986.

The Department, with me as the junior Minister, was the first to raise the question whether the upper limbless should be included. I re-emphasise that there is no question of quotas, targets or discrimination against any group. It would be helpful, as the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe said, to recognise the predominant view of the organisations representing the most severely disabled, and to take their views and interests into account. There is probably a solution, but it is not found by saying that 150 people are excluded because of something that has been done. We must find what regulations will allow in those who are most severely handicapped.

Ms. Ruddock: I thank the Minister for that intervention, although it was not overly helpful. I understand that some people were excluded from the scheme in 1986 and that Alison Wright was one of them. What the Minister has said is on record. I took his remarks to mean that he was concerned about the prospect of the 1 million people who can already use the scheme becoming 2 million in the future. It is clear that he is concerned about numbers. Whatever his difficulty in looking back on consultations which come to a particular conclusion, it should not be beyond his imagination, determination and skill to find a way in which these people, who are quite properly seeking to be admitted to the scheme, could be so admitted.

The hon. Member for Leeds, North-East spoke about variations in pricing and the need for display of information where such variations occur. These variations are an important factor in traffic management. The hon. Gentleman spoke of the possibility of empty car parks and encouraging people into them through low tariffs. There may be such empty car parks in rural areas and small cities, but in London we have the opposite problem. There are too many vehicles and too much congestion, so restraint must be exercised and management improved.

The flexibility that these new systems can offer would be an extremely important tool in traffic management and control and car restraint within our cities. The variations in pricing should be carefully displayed so that people have no doubt about the penalties that they face if they bring in vehicles in peak hours.

Traffic and parking problems in our cities are important factors in our consideration of the Bill and the amendment. The problem of parking is growing, as the number of cars and goods vehicles on our roads increases. The White Paper envisages traffic increasing by between 83 and 142 per cent. by the year 2025. That could mean an increase of 32·7 million vehicles. Hon. Members may wish to speculate on the scale and size of car parks needed to house so many additional cars, no matter what method of payment might by instituted and no matter how well information might be displayed at car park entrances. If we reach that point—as we shall, unless the Government act more positively to deal with traffic problems—the regulations proposed in the amendment might mean signs stating, "Did you need to bring your car today?" or even "Full up—please use the bus next time." The sheer volume of cars and other vehicles is not only bad for parking—it is bad for our environment and bad for safety. I remind the House that the casualty rate in London is the highest in the country. If we continue to build more roads, especially in city areas, we shall exacerbate all those problems.

The provision of car parks with efficient methods of payment and well displayed signs is essential to deal with existing problems. We must also adopt a package of measures, of which an important component must be stricter parking controls. That means increasing fines and penalties for illegal parking and violation of bus lanes. Although we certainly need this small and modest Bill, we also need a more comprehensive approach to traffic problems. The Government should introduce major legislation to tackle the difficulties with which we are all becoming more and more familiar day by day.

We welcome the amendment and appreciate its safety and security aspects. We are in favour of any method of payment which improves safety for those who deal with the machines and use the car parks. We are increasingly becoming a cashless society. That is our choice. We want an opportunity to pay through vouchers—free vouchers, I hope, for the disabled—or magnetic systems, for those of us who can make those choices and who have sufficient money to do so.

The Bill will be widely welcomed throughout the country and the Opposition wholeheartedly support it. The hon. Member for Leeds, North-East has had all-party support for his Bill, which is very rewarding for anyone who, as I have done, introduces a private Member's Bill.

[Ms. Ruddock]

Piloting such a Bill through the House is an interesting and stimulating experience, but it is also a complex task. I pay tribute also to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, who paved the way for this measure with his original Bill.

The hon. Member for Leeds, North-East said that he was offering us a Bill which had no losers, only gainers. That must be extraordinarily rare in this House. The Bill will shortly reach the statute book, which will give the hon. Gentleman a great deal of satisfaction.

Mr. Wilshire: I echo the words of congratulation from the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope). It is no mean feat to bring a Bill this far, this smoothly.

Like my hon. Friend, I welcome the Lords amendment because it provides additional safeguards for consumers. I am not known as one who always enthuses about everything that aims to further the cause of consumerism. My wife ran a shop for far too long for me to be wholly in favour of everything to do with consumerism. Therefore, when faced with such an amendment, the first question I ask is whether it is trying to protect people from their own stupidity. The second question is whether it sets out to assume that all providers of service are necessarily crooks. If those were the sorts of consumerism embodied in the amendment, I would not support it. I have learnt not to accept such approaches to consumerism. In the end, they turn the consumer—be he a driver or a shopper—into a human version of a rottweiler who will simply launch unprovoked attacks on quite innocent providers of services.

I have no hesitation in supporting the additional protection for consumers provided by the amendment. When drivers set out to buy parking space they are all too often vulnerable, and certainly not through their own stupidity. They are often at their wits end and may have spent a long time looking for any available parking space. They are often late for meetings—which, I suspect, has something to do with the tourists referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight). Because they are late they will take any parking space they can find.

Even when drivers are not simply chasing every available parking space, they are still vulnerable because they cannot obtain the information they need because there are no signs and the car parks are not staffed. Somebody should tackle those problems, and it seems sensible that that person should be the Secretary of State. I accept that there should be certain exceptions—the "just in case" argument is sensible. However, I am not attracted to the argument that just because a car park is small, or just because a car park is temporary, that is a blanket reason why information should not be available.

If the Secretary of State is given the necessary enabling powers, the test whether he needs to use them should be based on whether drivers are genuinely short of information. In an ideal world information would be available at all car parks, but we do not live in an ideal world. In a near ideal world it should be sufficient simply to say to local councils, "You are not providing enough information." I regret to say that experience has taught us that local government as a whole, of whatever political persuasion, does not have a good track record on doing what it is asked to do. In the world in which we live we must, therefore, make reserve powers available to the Secretary of State.

Hon. Members could no doubt cite many examples of sharp practice and sloppy management by car park operators. I suspect that private operators rather than local government operators are more guilty of sharp practice. Only last weekend, while on the way to Wimbledon, I was stuck in yet another traffic jam and saw a cardboard sign for a temporary car park stating, "Car park spaces here—£4·50." When I pulled up to the entrance, another cardboard sign said, "Car park spaces here—£7·50." That is a classic example of getting the driver committed to coming into the car park and then pushing up the price. It is right that steps should be taken to protect the consumer against such sharp practice.

Again, we could all cite examples of sloppy management. What makes me most furious is when, on a wet day like today, I have driven a very long way and, having found a space at a pay-and-display car park, I find that I have no change. The change machine does not exist or has broken down and somewhere there is a little hut containing two employees sitting drinking tea or playing cards, and a scruffy notice is stuck on the window saying, "No change". That is sloppy management. If that is the sort of car park that the operator wishes to run, he should put a notice outside saying "This is a sloppily run car park. There is no change available."

11.30 pm

If it is necessary to force certain car park operators to put up notices, we should spell out what those notices should say. First, they should say whether the car park is full. We have all had to make the vast trek up five or six storeys of a multi-storey car park, only to find that we need not have gone there in the first place. They should also say whether the car park is supervised, not only because supervision might provide the chance of obtaining change but because knowing whether a large, dark car park is supervised is important, especially at night.

The notices should also specify the method of payment, and whether change is available. They should mention the closing time, if there is one. How many of us have discovered, having gone back to collect the car late at night, that the gates were locked at 7 pm and that, moreover, no address or telephone number is available for someone who might be able to deal with the matter?

Reference has been made to disabled people. If a car park provides facilities such as special spaces, lifts or escalators, the advance sign should state, "This car park caters for the disabled." It would also be helpful if the sign stated whether the car park had toilets. Certainly it should specify the charges. If there is a choice—particularly in the inner cities—between cheaper long-stay rates at the edge of the city and a higher charge for a short stay, advance signs should not only make it clear whether the car park is long-stay or short-stay but should expalin how to find a long-stay car park: not everyone will know the way in a strange town. Notices should give the names, addresses and telephone numbers of owners and operators, so that drivers can take action if they wish to complain or to obtain further information.

Other hon. Members have already raised the question of where the notices should be placed. I think that there should be signs in several places, and that the amount of

information and how it is displayed should vary according to where they are. A large, simple advance notice, telling the drivers whether it is worth their while to join a queue and where they can go to seek alternative parking, would be extremely helpful. Notices should encourage—or require—drivers who opt to queue not to block the road and prevent others from driving around to look for another car park.

For years I drove a caravanette which was over height in many places, and I was frequently unable to discover from car park advance notices what the headroom would be if I joined the queue. I therefore feel that notices should specify size restrictions.

Motorists should be able to read a sign at the main entrance before they are committed to driving into the car park. Like others, I suspect, I have had to take a ticket and have then found it difficult, sometimes impossible, to be let out of the car park—because it is full or the conditions are not satisfactory—without having to pay for the indignity of having driven around the car park and then left. The notice at the main entrance should say whether the car park is full and should state the charges, if any. It is crucial that the closing time be clearly displayed, along with the method of payment. Details of owner and operator should appear not only on all signs but on all tickets, so that the driver has a written record for the future.

The size of the notice will have been touched on only briefly when the lawyers were deciding how much small-print gobbledegook should appear. Signs whose print is too small for drivers to read, however, are not only useless but potentially dangerous. Any regulations or code of conduct must specify that the basic information on notices can be read by a driver still sitting in his car.

We have discussed whether temporary car parks should be exempted, but I am anxious to hear whether they can be included. I am not a lawyer, and I am not sure whether the legislation would cover only permanent car parks, but I feel that it should extend to temporary ones. I suspect that the wording of the Lords amendment, which can require local authorities to perform certain duties, confines the scope of the Bill to local government. Although it may well be the largest provider of parking spaces, local government is far from being the only provider, and neither sharp practice nor sloppy management is its exclusive prerogative. If at this late stage the Bill cannot be made to cover privately operated car parks, I hope that someone will strike lucky in next year's ballot and set about seeking to extend it in another private Member's Bill.

I appreciate the cunning of the proposed penalties: they are a good way of concentrating wonderfully the minds of councillors who realise that they may be surcharged if they do not deal with problems. The Bill does not specify, however, who is to put up notices stating that the existing notices are no longer valid because they do not comply with the regulations.

Having said that, I do not hesitate to add that both the amendment and the Bill have my wholehearted support. Let me finish where I began, by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East, who has done a splendid job. I am not entirely sure whether I envy him the task of steering a private Member's Bill through the House, but he nevertheless deserves the congratulations of all of us.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) on piloting the Bill through its stages in the House. It has been interesting for those of us who served on the Standing Committee to observe the enormous skill with which he has done so. He displayed that skill again today. When some of my hon. Friends tried to introduce party political divisions of view, he poured oil on troubled waters and bipartisanship returned.

I also congratulate spokesmen on both Front Benches on being able to make such wide-ranging speeches within the confines—and the rules of order—of such a narrow Lords amendment. I pay tribute to their ingenuity.

Mr. Frank Cook: Sheer skill.

Mr. Hughes: I bow to the experience of the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook).

My hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) was right to say that the signs must be clear and that certain minimum requirements are necessary. This is not, as some hon. Members have suggested, a matter of byelaws and numerous details about the rules and regulations—nor is it a matter of posting signs in various different languages. We need clear signs providing people with the basic information that they require, in at least one language—English. We can leave it to local authorities to decide whether, for the benefit of tourists or for members of the ethnic community, such signs need to appear in other languages.

I could point to examples of London car parks which are the responsibility of councils controlled by all three main political parties from which it is very difficult to find one's way out. Signs indicating exit points would help the flow of cars departing and leave spaces free for others. I commend subsection (2)(d) because making it impossible for local authorities to collect any money unless they apply the regulations is a wonderful way of concentrating their minds and ensuring that they display the right signs and comply with the regulations in other ways. I cannot remember which political party controls Ealing council, but my experience of parking in that borough leads me to believe that that council will be unable to comply with the regulations.

I welcome the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister concerning the disabled and his remark that although new ideas and technology are important to them and can make an enormous difference to the quality of their lives, such developments are no replacement for orange badges. I welcome also the nature of the scheme that my hon. Friend wants to operate. During my time in London local government, concern was felt by people of all political persuasions that the orange badge scheme was being misused. Although I accept the argument of the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) that the number of badges should not be limited, if too many people who do not really need badges are allowed to have them, the scheme will not be so advantageous as it might be for those who really need the orange badge facility.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: If local authorities believe that there are too many orange badges, they will introduce their own regimes, with the loss of the national benefit. As to qualifying criteria, I refer my hon. Friend to Statutory Instrument No. 1740 of 1982, which refers to

"a permanent and substantial disability which causes inability to walk or very considerable difficulty in walking."

That can either be interpreted as admitting a very small group of disabled, which means that the problem can

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

easily be solved by local authorities rather than by the Department, or the wording must be amended. The number involved is not 100 versus 1 million badge holders. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members who are interested in that aspect will address their minds to the basis of our 1986 consultation. I deeply regret that some interests outside Parliament who now display a great interest in the matter did not bother to write to us about it in 1986, 1987, 1988 or 1989.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that further clarification.

Anyone who read the article about the orange badge scheme in last week's issue of *The Sunday Times* would instinctively have taken the view that the only reasonable thing to do is issue the additional 150 badges in question. However, my hon. Friend the Minister explained today that it is not so simple as that. If there is to be reasonableness and justice, many categories of the disabled deserve consideration. If *The Sunday Times* really cares about the cause, and not just about a front page headline, this Sunday it will present a detailed analysis and provide a genuine insight into all the problems.

11.45 am

Cashless parking is extremely important. Sometimes I think that local authorities choose the combination of coins that is most difficult to find in one's pocket. I have often been caught out, as I am sure other right hon. and hon. Members have, after entering a car park in the belief that I had the coins needed for payment. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East describes the Bill as a relatively modest measure, but it is significant to the motorist, who will be extremely grateful for all the work that my hon. Friend has done. Tribute should also be paid to him by car manufacturers and distributors. One day in the future, perhaps we will all be saying, "There is a car park, and I can park there easily using my Kirkhope card."

Mr. Arbuthnot: The amendment is important and gives the Secretary of State a power rather than a duty to make regulations, which is the right way to go about it. Right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House hope that he will not have to use that power and that local authorities will enter into voluntary arrangements. In the same way that it is better that the Secretary of State has a power rather than a duty, it is better that local authorities act under their own volition than under central direction. Ours is not a centralist party—or should not be—and this should not be a centralist House of Commons. I am delighted that the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) agrees that the Secretary of State should be given the power to compel local authorities to take certain action if they do not do so of their own accord.

I am delighted also that the hon. Member for Deptford has persuaded her party to support the Bill. All too often in this House, we shout yes while the Opposition shout no, and vice versa. In respect of this Bill at least we can all shout yes, and I hope that that is a growing trend.

I particularly welcome the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) about the amendment that aims at improving the situation of the disabled. As to the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister concerning Thalidomide victims, having read the newspaper features about Alison Wright, I was undecided until I went on to read the various articles in the *Evening Standard*, when I was sure that the policy of my hon. Friend the Minister is the right one. It is true that hard cases make bad law, and my hon. Friend should be congratulated on resisting intense and emotional pressures to produce a result that would not necessarily be right when judged by the criteria decided after considerable consultation and a great deal of thought by many people.

The comment in the *Evening Standard* that it does not matter if 2 million people have orange badges was ridiculous, and on that point I part company with the hon. Member for Deptford. Of course it matters how many badges are issued. The more there are, the less valuable they become to those who have them. I accept the argument of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) that there should be stringent enforcement of the rules governing the issue of orange badges and severe penalties on those who breach them. However, to some extent it must also be a question of numbers.

Ms. Ruddock: Does not the hon. Gentleman concede that there are about 6 million people with disabilities and that if it can be shown legitimately—I stress the word "legitimately"—that there is a real need for parking concessions for as many as 2 million people, we must accept it? The question must be need. We should not say that just because a person has not come forward or has not been identified as having a disability that is relevant to the need to have a car parking concession, he or she should not have it.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The question is not only need. The question is also balance. If so many people have orange badges that those who cannot walk are prevented from parking near enough to the places where they want to go, that damages everybody. If the 6 million people to whom the hon. Lady referred had orange badges——

Ms. Ruddock: That is not what I said.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I know that that is not what she suggested, but I am taking her argument to absurd extremes in order to demonstrate that there must be a balance. If all the 6 million had orange badges, the amount of car parking space that was available to those who cannot walk would be limited because of the pressure on space. Those who cannot walk must have an orange badge, but the basis has to be balance.

Ms. Ruddock: I thought the hon. Gentleman was reaching the point where he was failing to see that the entirely able-bodied would be put at a disadvantage and would have to park much further away from the places to which they wanted to have access.

Mr. Arbuthnot: That would be the right result. I hope that it will happen.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is vital to recognise that the Department and others are trying to work on the 6 million figure. We are not necessarily dealing with people who are travelling by car. The poor, the disabled and the elderly often have to travel by bus. The bus industry is involved in significant changes. There have been dramatic improvements, most of which were on display at the mobility road show to which, sadly, the media did not pay much attention. I invite the media to ask themselves what they can do by means of coverage that would help the greatest

number. Within the 6 million people, there are 1 million, or even more, who have difficulty in carrying shopping, either because they have no upper limbs or because their limbs do not work, for one reason or another. Within that group there are people who cannot walk. We need to solve the shopping problem. We need also to solve the problem of putting money into meters, which is where we return to the Lords amendment. We must also—here I thoroughly support what my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) is saying—pick out those who are faced with the greatest difficulty or with the impossibility of walking. For them the orange badge concession or facility is absolutely essential. If we cannot distinguish between that group of people and another group of 1 million or 2 million, we are not doing our job properly.

I understand why media interest is aroused. If the editor of the *Evening Standard* watches an ITN programme or sees an article in *The Sunday Times* which, because of pressure of space on the front page, was not as full as it might have been, one can understand how one quarter turn of a cog can lead to the editor of the *Evening Standard* saying, "All right, we're going to get at Bottomley." I do not mind if I am got at. What matters is that the 50,000 or the 500,000 people who most need the mobility advantage of the orange badge should get something of value out of a national scheme.

Mr. Arbuthnot: There is a look in your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, which leads me to believe that I ought to get off orange badges and turn to the question of local authorities.

The amendment may lead to a proliferation of signs that would be good for the information of motorists but would be bad if they led to motorists being distracted, particularly if those signs were as prominent as hon. Members have said today that they hope they will be. Too much information might be displayed. Companies can confuse their readers by providing too much information in their reports, with the result that nobody knows exactly where to look for the information that he or she wants. There could be the same problem outside car parks. The more eye-catching the notices outside car parks, the more dangerous they may be to drivers who may be distracted by them.

The amendment does not solve all the problems. It will not help motorists who are queuing on a ramp. There will still be pressure from motorists further down the queue, urging drivers in front of them to get on with it. If there is no queuing on the ramp, there will be queuing on the highway, which would be even worse.

Still, all things considered, it is a very good amendment, which we ought to accept, to a good Bill. Therefore I congratulate my hon. Friend on his excellent measure.

Mr. Kirkhope: We have had an extremely full, very interesting and though-provoking debate. I am sure that the Minister will take on board many of the points that have been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I hope, therefore, that they will excuse me if I do not deal with a number of the points that they have made. I noticed that the Minister was scribbling away furiously during their contributions, so I have no doubt that any regulations that are proposed at any point will take their points into account.

It is appropriate, however, to pay tribute to a few hon. Members. I pay tribute first to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on having introduced his far-sighted private Member's Bill in 1986. It allowed me to climb on board his vehicle while it was still on the move—a potentially very dangerous thing to do. Nevertheless, it seems to have worked out quite well. I pay tribute also to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). One effect of the amendment will be to help disabled people. The right hon. Gentleman was the instigator of the very fine orange badge scheme, and I pay tribute to him for his helpful and thought-provoking remarks in the debate.

I pay tribute, too, to Lord Teviot who kindly agreed to steer the Bill through the other place. He did so with great flair and imagination. He made very helpful and constructive suggestions throughout its passage in the other place. Lord Teviot takes a great interest in transport matters and he displayed a similar interest in this measure, which he so kindly handled for me in the other place.

I am also grateful to my colleagues on both sides of the House who were kind enough to sponsor the Bill and to all hon. Members who have been good enough to contribute so constructively and helpfully to the debate, both on this occasion and on previous occasions. In particular I thank the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) who has been so helpful. She is an Opposition Member. It underlines the fact that not everything that we do in this place has to be contested. There are certain issues on which all reasonable honourable Members of good will can combine and do something useful, to the benefit of a large number of people and to groups of people within that large number who particularly need help.

I mention also *The Sunday Times*. Every other hon. Member seems to have done so, but I do it in this light. I congratulate *The Sunday Times* on its Thalidomide victims campaign. It did an excellent job on that issue, as on other issues in the past. I hope that the slight differences of opinion that have been expressed this morning about the nature of its campaign on this general issue will not cloud the fact that nevertheless *The Sunday Times* has made a major contribution to the debate. I know that the Minister has also been involved in co-operating with the media generally. I hope that the co-operation will continue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) said that the card ought to be named after me. I said that this measure involves no losers, only winners. It would be taking things a little too far, and I should be sticking my neck out much too far, if his suggestion were to be adopted. Nevertheless, it was kind of my hon. Friend to make it. There may be occasions on which people will be able to glide into a car park, place their plastic card in the meter and go straight to their allotted space, with all the parking signs perfect and everything wonderful. They will get out humming to themselves and saying to themselves, "How wonderful that I've been able to use the Kirkhope card." But there may just conceivably be occasions—I admit that it is unlikely—when there is an enormous queue and an enormous hold-up. The machine is broken, the notice has fallen down, the car's tyres have gone flat or the petrol has run out as the car enters the car park and the driver will take a small card out of his wallet. I prefer not to say what he would say—or perhaps only in French.

I said that I would not deal with all the points that have been raised and I do not intend to do so, with the

[Mr. Kirkhope]

indulgence of my hon. Friend. I shall mention only almost the last remark of my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) who said that conceivably too much information could be provided. I accept what he says and I realise that there is some risk, but I would prefer to take that risk. It is very rare that we have too much information, and we would welcome having a little too much rather than far too little. I renew my invitation to the House to accept the amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 1 agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Control of Smoke Pollution Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Title

Lords amendment: No. 1, in line 1, leave out "repeal" and insert "amend"

12 noon

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 2.

Mr. Hunter: As is well known, the amendments apply to the long title of the Bill. If they are accepted, the amended long title will read:

"A Bill to amend section 16(1)(a) of the Clean Air Act 1956 and section 1 of the Clean Air Act 1968."

Some words of explanation are needed as to why there is a need for these Lords amendments to be considered at such a late stage.

I support the arguments in another place and suggest that we first consider why the Bill has the wrong long title and then to consider why the amendments will make the long title the right title. Ironically, virtually the only controversy generated by the Bill has been centred on the long title. When the Bill received Third Reading on 14 April, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) acknowledged:

"It is a small Bill, but it is an important amendment to existing legislation."

She continued:

"the Bill is important in the context of air pollution."—[*Official Report*, 14 April 1989; Vol. 150, c. 1161.]

Similar sentiments were expressed during the passage of the Bill through another place. On Second Reading, Lord Graham of Edmonton said that the intention of the Bill would receive a warm welcome from the Opposition Benches. Lord Mayhew made an interesting observation, expressing the opinion that it would be inappropriate for such a Bill to receive a Second Reading in another place without a word of support from the Democratic Benches. Throughout the proceedings in the House, there has been not one contribution from SLD and SDP Members on Third Reading or during debates on amendments. Today we note the total absence of SLD and SDP Members. In Committee in another place, Lord Tordoff, another Opposition spokesman, praised the Bill and declared total support from the Opposition. Nevertheless, there has been some controversy about the long title; hence the amendments from another place.

In moving that we accept the Lords amendments, let me first explain how and why the Bill came to have the wrong long title. The answer lies significantly in the origins of the Bill. The genesis of the Bill was a Government document entitled "Air Pollution Control in Great Britain: Review and Proposals", a consultation paper issued in December 1986 by the Department of the Environment, the Scottish Development Department and the Welsh Office. The sequel to that was "Air Pollution Control in Great Britain: follow-up to consultation paper issued in December 1986". It was issued in December 1988 by the Department of the Environment, the Scottish Development Department and the Welsh Office.

The beginnings of the controversy about the long title can be traced back to the consultation process. The introduction to the consultation paper states the following objectives:

"In 1982 the Government decided that a comprehensive review of air pollution legislation should be undertaken. This was in part a response to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's recommendations in its Fifth Report, that there should be new, comprehensive legislation to cover all aspects of industrial air pollution."

It set out conclusions from that review and invited comments on the proposals for action. One of those was: "to make certain other changes to the Clean Air Acts 1956 and 1968".

Clause 1 of the Bill relates to domestic smoke nuisance from private dwellings.

Paragraph 8 of the consultation paper is significant in understanding why the Bill has the wrong title. It states:

"Under existing legislation, the emission of 'dark smoke' from chimneys of all buildings in all areas is forbidden. In areas subject to smoke control the discharge of any smoke is generally forbidden. In addition, smoke may be a statutory nuisance for the purposes of the Public Health Act 1936, except by virtue of section 16(1)(a) of the Clean Air Act 1956 where it is emitted from a chimney of a private dwelling. There is no good reason why troublesome emissions of non-dark smoke from houses in areas not subject to smoke control should be exempt from control."

There follows the key sentence:

"To remedy this it is proposed to repeal section 16(1)(a) of the Clean Air Act 1956".

It was then believed that the repeal of section 16(1)(a) of the 1956 Act was necessary to close the loophole in that Act.

The paragraphs of the consultation paper dealing with clause 2 of the Bill—entitled "Dark Smoke from Industrial or Trade Premises"—proposed changes to the Clean Air Acts 1956 and 1968. Those paragraphs explore at length particular loopholes and weaknesses that were experienced by local authorities in bringing prosecutions. Paragraph 3 states:

"The following amendments to the legislation are being considered in order to ease these enforcement problems"

That is partly how the long title of the Bill came into being—from what was believed at the time of the consultative process to be necessary to close the loopholes in the Clean Air Acts; that was the repeal of part of the 1956 Act and the amendment of part of the 1968 Act. For reasons that I shall explain in a minute, it came to be realised that that was an incorrect analysis. It should not have been decided that it was necessary to repeal part of the 1956 Act and to amend part of the 1968 Act. On the contrary, all that was necessary was to amend both.

Why is the amendment necessary? When I introduced the Bill on 21 December, parliamentary counsel had not finished the first draft of the Bill—by no means, I am assured, an unusual state of affairs. There was a title, but there was no Bill. The Bill's long title was, as I have said, drawn from the terminology of the consultative process to repeal section 16(1)(a) of the Clean Air Act 1956 and to amend section 1 of the Clean Air Act 1968, but the Bill itself did not exist. After introduction, parliamentary counsel produced a first draft of the Bill duly repealing section 16(1)(a) of the Clean Air Act 1956, as the title said it would.

My objective has been and remains the implementation of the consultative process conclusion that non-dark smoke emissions in areas not subject to smoke control should come under the ambit of the statutory nuisance provisions of the public health legislation. However, parliamentary counsel realised that that objective was not best achieved by repealing section 16(1)(a) of the 1956 Act. So as not to depart from the consultation paper proposal, parliamentary counsel concluded that it would be better to retain part of section 16(1)(a). Thus, subsection (1)(a) required amendment, not repeal. The title of the Bill said the reverse. That meant that, at some stage, an amendment to the long title had to be tabled. Obviously, time would be spent in Committee, but the prospects of the Bill becoming law would be greater, so I thought, if the Bill had its Committee stage on the Floor of the House immediately after Second Reading.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way while still in full flow. I, and I am sure other hon. Members, are riveted by this exposition. May we assume that the good people of Basingstoke will be thrilled by what is happening today, and that we can expect a pollution-free statue erected to my hon. Friend's memory?

Mr. Hunter: That is an attractive proposition, but my serious reply is that the provisions of the Bill will be immensely beneficial to many people. There are loopholes in existing legislation. This Bill closes them, and it will be greatly appreciated by many people throughout the country, not least my constituents.

The problem was amending the defective long title. Two options that were left were to do so in the Lords or by means of verbal amendment on Third Reading. It was originally put to me that the disadvantage of making the amendment in the House of Lords was the risk of delay. The Bill would have been lost if it had not returned to the House by today. Therefore, I took the unusual but entirely legitimate step of introducing the amendments by the verbal amendment procedure. The Bill is not controversial. The amendments simply ensure that the long title accurately reflects the contents of the Bill.

12.15 pm

On 14 April, Opposition Members spent more than four hours debating the verbal amendment procedure. To ensure that progress could be made, I was obliged to withdraw the amendments, and they were made in due course in another place on 8 June by the Earl of Portsmouth. I have made the point that the Bill has been welcomed by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North and by the Government and the Opposition in another place. It was not substantially criticised on Third Reading. The only controversy has centred on the long title. The amendments merely reconcile the long title with the body of the Bill.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): All hon. Members will congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on clearly and authoritatively explaining the amendments. It is a Herculean task to introduce a private Member's Bill that will redress many grievances. Many citizens in this country, not only in Basingstoke, have every reason to appreciate my hon. Friend's efforts and persistence. Many of us are now rather the wiser about the detail of parliamentary drafting and the procedures of the House.

In so far as responsibility for the error in the original drafting lies within advice that was given by my own Department, I offer my hon. Friend a fulsome apology. It

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

has meant that this excellent, sensible, and practical measure, which will close some loopholes in the existing legislation, has been deprived of the full and thorough debate that many hon. Members would have liked it to have, because we have become deeply enmeshed in intricate drafting details. In so far as it affects the long title, it would have been disastrous if there had been any flaw in a Bill, which will play a thoroughly useful part in the campaign against air pollution.

On Third Reading, during a four-hour debate which ranged over several matters, the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) was able to fill much of his time with reminiscences, details and knowledge of a great many subjects. He recollected bicycling across London 40 years ago. To protect himself from smoke and pollution, he put gauze over his mouth. By the time he got to the end of his journey, the gauze was sooty and dirty, giving a clear sign of the pollution that then existed. We have made remarkable progress in the battle against pollution. The smogs that sent even the likes of me home from school early are now a thing of the past.

The amount of sunshine at Kew in the winter, which used to be double that for the centre of London, is now roughly the same as that in the centre at London. That is a clear sign of the way things have improved. Smoke emission have reduced by 85 per cent., and sulphur dioxide emissions have reduced by 50 per cent. It is not only visible forms of pollution that are being tackled, but many invisible forms, such as chlorofluorocarbons, in our battle to reduce the effects of greenhouse gases and climate change, the campaign to introduce tighter emission standards for cars, and the introduction of unleaded petrol. Many of those issues are global. My hon. Friend's Bill addresses some immediate and local grievances.

There have been long-standing complaints by the neighbours of emitters of non-dark smoke in non-smoke-controlled areas that they have no redress. Some years ago, one of my constituents had precisely that grievance. As a result of clause 1, together with the amendments that were introduced in the Lords, it will now be possible to take action against the emitters of non-dark smoke from dwellings in non-smoke-controlled areas. That is an important contribution. Like clause 2, that was supported by many hon. Members, especially Opposition Members.

There have been complaints from people throughout the country. One example given was bus burning in Barnsley. Complaints were made because there were no powers to take action against those burning buses on open ground of which they were not the owners. Furthermore, if that happened at night, it could not necessarily be proved that dark smoke was being produced. On the strength of the amendments made in the Lords, and together with clause 2, it will be possible at last to take the necessary action to redress that grievance.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke is a distinguished and long-serving member of the Select Committee on the Environment. He has particular expertise and knowledge about air pollution. He, more than many other hon. Members, is concerned to tackle questions of air pollution, on a global, regional, national or more immediate and local basis. Many people will have every reason to be grateful to him for closing these loopholes.

I congratulate my hon. Friend and thank him for his persistence in seeing his Bill through the necessary stages. I hope that it will not be long before those who have been afflicted by this unpleasant problem will be able to take the necessary action on the strength of his endeavours.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): First, I must pass on the apologies of my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) who is unable to be here today. However, as the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) will recall, my hon. Friend has expressed her personal support for the Bill.

On behalf of the Opposition I should add that we support the amendment. We are delighted to support any measure that will give us better air to breathe and will mean that our atmosphere is better protected, not only for human life, but for all other life on our planet, which we all now appreciate is so endangered by the emissions that we human beings produce.

I am happy to lend our support to the Bill. I shall take up no more of the time of the House, except once again to congratulate the hon. Member for Basingstoke and to say that we are delighted to support the reconciliation of his measure with its long title.

Mr. Hunter: I suspect that all hon. Members who secure a place in the ballot for private Members' Bills experience a mixture of relief and satisfaction when their Bill has finished its passage through Parliament. I assure the House that I am no exception.

I thank the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) for her comments, which I have received gratefully. I am delighted to have her support and that of her party for my Bill.

I should also like to thank my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary and her officials for the advice and guidance that they have given me during the past few months. I have greatly appreciated it. I feel a special debt of gratitude to the Clerks for their remarkable tolerance and patience in trying to help me and in explaining what I should be doing next.

The Earl of Portsmouth spent a great deal of time preparing and piloting through the Bill in the House of Lords. I understand that it was the first occasion on which he had done so, and I put on the record my sincere thanks to him.

This is a small but important Bill. It seeks to close two loopholes that have emerged in the Clean Air Acts over the years. The Government have responded responsibly to the need for action to combat air pollution. I am glad to have played a small part by introducing the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 1 and 2 agreed to.

Common Land (Rectification of Registers) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

REMOVAL FROM REGISTERS

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 1, leave out lines 12 to 18 and insert—

"(a) that

(i) there is a dwellinghouse on the land and, if and so far as the land is not the site of that dwellinghouse, it is ancillary to that dwellinghouse; or

(ii) the land is ancillary to a dwellinghouse which is not on the land; and

(b) that the requirements of paragraph (a) above have been satisfied at all times since 5th August 1945."

12.24 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 2 to 4 and 7.

Mr. Favell: I am sorry that their Lordships have had to make what appear to be extensive amendments to this relatively short Bill. In my own defence, I should say that the Bill was introduced from behind Mr. Speaker's Chair, and that originally it appeared to have little chance of reaching the statute book. However, hon. Members of all parties have agreed that the Bill fulfils one of Parliament's roles in that it puts right a manifest wrong.

Thanks to a great deal of help from the Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) and her Department, and to the co-operation of the Opposition parties, especially from the hon. Members for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), and for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Miss Walley) and from Lord Graham of Edmonton, the Bill has been given a speedy passage through both Houses and now it is back before this House. I should also like to put on record my gratitude to Baroness Blatch, who guided the Bill so swiftly and competently through the other place.

The Common Registration Act 1965 required, for the first time, all commons, their owners and common rights, town and village greens to be recorded on registers to be maintained by county councils. That was an excellent and timely piece of legislation because commons were disappearing fast. As Kate Ashbrook of the Open Spaces Society, who does so much good work to conserve our commons has said in a recent booklet, commons

"range from the huge heather uplands of Dartmoor and the North Pennines, to the crags of Snowdonia and the Lake District; from the Chiltern hilltops, ancient woodlands like Epping, Ashdown and the New Forest to alluvial meadows near Oxford and on the Cambridgeshire Ouse. The coast of Norfolk, the heaths of Surrey and Suffolk, and surburban lungs like Wimbledon and Clapham in London and the Strays of York are all commons."

Under the 1965 Act, 1·5 million acres of common land was registered, but unfortunately the three-year registration period was too short and much more land that should have been registered was not. There are other unresolved problems, such as the public's right of access to common land, which is yet to be determined.

I look forward to hearing what my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will say in reply. The Government accept the case for further comprehensive legislation and I urge my hon. Friend that that be done, for the general good, as swiftly as possible.

However, there is an even more pressing and serious problem for the few. There is a problem for those 500 people whose houses and gardens were registered under the 1965 Act as common land by mistake. My Bill is directed at helping those unfortunate people whose plight was first brought to the attention of the House two or three years ago by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) in an Adjournment debate. He told the House about the plight of Mr. Casteliain, who owned what was once a coastguard's hut near Land's End, but which had been converted into a house many years previously. It was later discovered to have been registered as common land by mistake and consequently is virtually unsaleable.

12.30 pm

Many hon. Members will have read recently in *The Times* of the case of Mr. John Roe and his wife Irene, which I first came across through a solicitor colleague of mine who is in a practice to which I am a consultant. Mr. and Mrs. Roe live in a former vicarage on the moors near Hexham. Three years ago they decided to sell it, because Mr. Roe's health was none too good. Hon. Members can just picture Mr. and Mrs. Roe's concern when a prospective purchaser discovered that their home was registered as common land, and their absolute despair when they discovered that there was no provision under the 1965 Act to take their house off the register. Therefore, the prospective purchaser was not prepared to buy. That scenario has been repeated on several occasions since, and they have still not sold their house.

Under the 1965 Act anybody could go to the local authority and provisionally register what they believe to be common land. Indeed, local authorities, parish councils and interested individuals have registered land as common land. I registered some land as common land in my village of Edale, which is where the Pennine Way starts. Fortunately, it did not have a house on it. Land having been registered provisionally, the council then advertised the fact in local newspapers and, if no objections were received within two years, the registration became final. Alas, there is no machinery to get the land off the register once it is on—even if it was a mistake to register it in the first place.

My short Bill allows the removal from the commons registers of houses and gardens which have been used as such since 5 August 1945. It is a narrow Bill, but, as a private Member's Bill, it can be no other. I hope that, when comprehensive legislation is introduced by the Government, other injustices—there are others—can be remedied. There is, for example, the case of Mr. Paxton, who purchased a Methodist chapel in Cornwall. He converted it into a house, but he now cannot sell it because it is registered as a village green.

Amendments Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 7 make it clear that, if a house is registered but not its garden, the house can be removed from the register and vice versa. If part only of the house or part only of a garden is registered, that, too, can be removed. Amendment No. 4 deals with the manner in which applications are to be referred to a commons commissioner for determination.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): The Bill, as it went to another place, was a good Bill, but I understand that its defect was that it only allowed the deregistration of a house and garden where the site of the house, as well as the garden, was put on a common land register. There may have been some question that, if only the garden was registered, the Bill may not have allowed deregistration.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) brought to my attention a specific case, which he has mentioned, to the House concerning a Mr. Paxton, who owns the old Methodist chapel in Trenarren. That case was originally taken up in the House by the late David Penhaligon and has since been pursed vigorously by his successor the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor).

I understand that Mr. Paxton bought the old Methodist chapel in 1986, with the benefit of planning permission, to convert it into a dwelling house. Following that, he carried out the conversion to a high standard, and he intended to use it as his permanent residence. However, he discovered later that he would have to move because of his work and he, therefore, needed to sell the house. However, it is registered as common land. To have a chapel registered as part of a green is extraordinary. The piece of land on which the chapel was built is 30 ft below the level of the land to the north of the land which is called the Ledrah, which was properly registered as a village green. Unfortunately, the chapel should not have been registered. It is obvious that a chapel is not part of a village green.

Since the property was registered as part of the village green the council dealing with the matter has changed to Restormel district council. It cannot produce any documentation referring to what happened on the original application to register the chapel as part of the village green because that documentation is owned by its predecessor council.

Obviously evidence and common sense suggest that a chapel cannot be part of a village green. One cannot have people exercising rights of common land over a chapel, especially if it has been converted into a dwelling house which is lived in. Obviously the House should take some steps to put that right.

I am not sure whether the Bill operates to put the matter right regarding the old chapel in Trenarren. I do not know whether Mr. Paxton will benefit from the Bill or whether he will be prevented from doing so because of the stringent time limits, which I believe my hon. Friend has been forced to introduce into the Bill. If that is so, it is a great pity because Mr. Paxton should have the benefit of the sensible changes that my hon. Friend has suggested. The necessary legislation should be introduced in the future.

Mr. Favell: I am sorry to tell my hon. Friend that Mr. Paxton will be unable to take advantage of the Bill as it has been narrowly drawn, for obvious reasons. The Open Space Society and many others interested in common land are concerned that the existing arrangements should not be altered except to remedy obvious mistakes. For that reason the Bill was drawn to include only houses and gardens that were in existence in 1945. Unfortunately Mr. Paxton's house was a chapel then. If I had had the benefit of that obvious example earlier in our proceedings we might have been able to do something to help him. Alas, that example came to our notice relatively late in our deliberations. Even so, I believe that its inclusion may have given rise to objections from other interested parties as it could have opened the flood gates for barns that have been converted into houses or are yet to be converted coming within my narrow Bill. I agree with my hon. Friend that the case he has highlighted must be dealt with. It is a complex procedure and when the Minister replies I hope that she will be able to tell us whether such cases could be dealt with when comprehensive legislation is introduced.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, although I am sure that Mr. Paxton will be saddened by his remarks. I am sure, however, that my hon. Friend is right.

I accept that those who are interested in preserving common land should hold as much of that land as is rightly common land. Common land is a good thing and it should not be diminished, but in Mr. Paxton's case an obvious mistake has been made. If my hon. Friend is right, Mr. Paxton's Methodist chapel will not be rescued by the Bill and, therefore, it is possible that the usual village green activities could be carried on in the chapel. Mr. Paxton has had legal advice to confirm that. Clearly that is absurd and something must be done at some stage to put that right.

I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies she will be able to give us some assurances that that matter will be considered.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I am glad of this opportunity to debate the Lords amendments and to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) on introducing his Bill. This morning we have already learnt of the difficulties of negotiating the parliamentary processes. In this case my hon. Friend, perhaps assisted by his legal background, introduced the Bill at the back of the Chair and he has made speedy progress. It deals with a subject about which many hon. Members hold extremely strong views. Therefore, it is all the more praiseworthy that he has managed to obtain so much support and encouragement in bringing forward the Bill. There is no doubt that appreciation is also due to my noble Friend Baroness Blatch, who did so much in another place.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport said, it was two and a half years ago that my hon. Friend the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) secured an Adjournment debate to draw to the attention of the House problems caused to people whose homes were incorrectly registered as common land under the Commons Registration Act 1965. My hon. Friend referred to the 1·5 million acres that were registered under the Act, which was a magnificent achievement and an important step forward. However, inevitably there were areas where land was not registered or, as in this case, was wrongly registered. I am told that, in their enthusiasm, some individuals did not properly check or realise the long-term implications of registration when it came to buying or selling a property.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockport referred to his own experience of a case in which an individual with whom his firm was associated was particularly badly afflicted. My hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) spoke of another case in which individuals are grievously affected by the unintended implications of what was an extremely important Act. My hon. Friend has made it clear that this matter will not redress the grievance to which he has referred. Others, such as those who live in what were

previously schools whose properties were wrongly registered are in a similar position. The problem does not merely concern chapels but, as has been stated, barns.

However, to cover all the details and grievances would be a task which even my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport might have found difficult to negotiate in a private Member's Bill. There is no doubt that those who had houses which were dwelling houses before 1945 had every reason to appreciate that my hon. Friend managed to limit the Bill's scope and, therefore, obtain agreement from all concerned.

The Department has been aware of the problem for some years. Shortly before the Adjournment debate to which I referred, the Common Land Forum report was published. It drew attention to the various types of incorrect registrations, including the one which the Bill hopes to redress. In the Adjournment Debate the then Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) recognised the injustice being suffered by these house owners and the need for early legislation on the subject. He recognised that the removal of incorrect registrations was part of the Common Land Forum's package of legislative proposals, on which the Government were about to go out to consultation, and that the forum was loath to see bits of its package taken out and dealt with separately.

There have been many calls for comprehensive legislation on commons. Hon. Members will be aware of the efforts taken to secure agreement on this important matter. We have not yet reached the stage where it is possible to reach agreement, in spite of the great efforts of the Countryside Commission and many others. However, the Department is considering the matter carefully and finding out when we shall be able to give a clearer indication of our intentions. There are agreements over many matters, but where differences exist, they are fairly entrenched differences of opinion.

The Bill does not enable all incorrect registrations to be removed. It does not cover agricultural land which may have been incorrectly registered or buildings, as my hon. Friends have said, which have been of a non-domestic purpose. However, by limiting the Bill's scope, my hon. Friend will make an important and helpful contribution.

The amendments that we are discussing will improve the Bill. Amendment No. 1 means that gardens can be considered on their own and will not have to constitute part of a house and garden. Amendments Nos. 2 and 3 make it possible to refer, on the basis of a commons commissioner's opinion, to only part of the land and not the full scope of the land originally brought to his attention. Lords amendment No. 4 states that the provisions of section 17(2) of the Commons Registration Act 1965 should be available so that the chief commons commissioner can allocate a commissioner and have an assessor to assist in the purpose. Under Lords amendment No. 7, the title will reflect the changes that have been made in the other place.

These are helpful, simple and uncontroversial amendments. The Bill is limited in scope, but is enormously important for those who have been affected by the inadvertent fall-out from the important 1965 Act.

12.45 pm

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): One of the benefits of coming to the House on a Friday and sitting on the Front Bench, sometimes without knowing that one will have to do so, is that one comes across extremely interesting subjects. This Bill falls into that category.

The protection of common land in Britain is extremely important and is dear to the hearts of most of us. Only when one finds, as the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) did, some significant exceptions and injustices is it right that there should be any tampering with that protection. We support the measure and the amendments.

We wish to express sympathy with the case of Mr. Paxton raised by the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot). It is an extraordinary example of the difficulties in which people can find themselves. Perhaps it will be a subject for another private Member's Bill. We sympathise with the Minister about the difficulties of introducing comprehensive legislation. This is a delicate matter and one on which it will be exceedingly difficult to reach agreement. However, I am pleased to be able to say that on this narrow measure where legitimate grievances have been demonstrated and where a cure can be found we are happy to support the Bill and the amendments. I congratulate the hon. Member for Stockport on introducing the Bill successfully.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords Amendments Nos. 2 to 4 agreed to.

Clause 2

REGULATIONS

Lords amendment: No. 5, in page 2, line 6, after "also" insert "(a)".

Mr. Favell: I beg to move, that this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendment No. 6.

Mr. Favell: Under Lords amendment No. 5, regulations will be made to provide for the type of evidence to be produced in support of an application for a property to be removed from the register. Obviously, it is important that before any common land is removed from the register the commons commissioner should be satisfied that all the requirements of the Bill are met. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be able to lay regulations to ensure that that is done.

Lords amendment No. 6 is important because it ensures that any application for common land to be removed from the register is properly advertised and brought to public notice and hopefully to the notice of the Open Spaces Society. I will be lobbying my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to ensure that that is done. This is to avoid the reverse of the situation which led to houses and gardens being registered in the first place because some people did not know what was going on. The amendment will ensure that the public are now aware of what is going on and that organisations interested in such matters are aware of any such applications so that they can consider them before any deletion is made from the register.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: These amendments improve further the powers of the Secretary of State to ensure that they will cover all regulations that are to be considered,

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

which will be necessary when dealing with this problem. During our earlier discussion of the Bill, much was made of the steps that we had taken to advertise properly the fact that a property was to be deregistered. That difficulty emerged largely because of ignorance of the land in question. Some householders did not know that their houses and the gardens in which they stood had been registered as common land because it was not properly advertised. It follows that it is particularly important that during this three-year period, which will affect those homes registered as dwelling houses which existed before 1945, all the proper steps are taken to ensure that this is done fairly and effectively and all those affected are made aware.

It will be necessary to inform all the appropriate local authorities and we agree that the Open Spaces Society, on behalf of the amenity bodies, should be informed when it is proposed to deregister houses or gardens. Excellent progress has been made in drawing up the regulations. We are extremely keen to make these available at the earliest opportunity. We shall, we hope, shortly be consulting local authorities, the National Farmers Union, the Country Landowners Association, the Law Society, the Open Spaces Society, the Countryside Commission, the Council on Tribunals and any others with a legitimate interest to ensure that the proper measures and all the necessary powers are in place.

We shall prescribe the form in which the objections must be made and make clear what is the necessary evidence that will be required to prove a case. We hope that, after sufficient consultation, it will be possible to lay regulations well before the end of this year. They will be subject to the negative resolution, but we very much hope that on the basis of this, and together with the further Lords amendments that increase the powers of the Secretary of State, it will be possible for the Bill to come into force effectively and usefully before the end of the year.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 6 and 7 agreed to.

International Parliamentary Organisations (Registration) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

REGISTER

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 1, line 7, at end, insert "are in receipt of an annual grant-in-aid to".

12.53 pm

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 5.

Mr. Marshall: I am glad to have the opportunity to say a word or two about these amendments, which reflect a good deal of important work carried out in the other place to bring this Bill back in a shape that I believe will commend itself to both sides of the House. The Bill was sent to the other place unopposed by this House, but it happened, for procedural reasons, that we did not have a chance to discuss some of its implications. Therefore, in supporting the amendments, it may be for the convenience of the House if I take the opportunity to highlight why I believe that the effect of carrying through these amendments, and those that follow, will be to highlight the activities of both the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. In that regard, I am glad to see on the Front Bench my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Mr. Durant). He is my opposite number as the chairman of the executive committee of the CPA. Muzzled he may be by his Whip's duties, but alert and vigilant as ever he is on behalf of the CPA.

The amendments are needed for technical drafting reasons. The objectives of the Bill are to set up a register of publicly financed international parliamentary organisations that are in receipt of grant in aid, both for British and international secretariats. The additional words about grant in aid are included in the amendments to clause 1 and the title.

The elimination of any reference to the Council of Europe, the North Atlantic Assembly and the Western European Union is in no way intended to reflect any criticism of those organisations. When the Bill was introduced, we were given technical advice that those three organisations should be included. Further advice, which coincided with the Bill going to another place, suggested that in two important respects—international secretariat and grant in aid provisions—there was a unique arrangement for the CPA and the IPU that did not relate to the three other organisations.

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to talk specifically about the CPA and the IPU. As is well known, on 29 June the IPU celebrated its centenary and Mr. Speaker unveiled a bust of Sir William Randal Cremer in the Members' Lobby. In the centenary year of an organisation founded by this Parliament and the French Parliament, it is splendid not only that a British parliamentarian has been honoured in that way, but that the bust of a Back Bencher

now appears in the Members' Lobby alongside the eminent figures who have occupied the office of Prime Minister

The IPU has always united all parts of the House. Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have given great support to both the IPU and the CPA when there have been visiting parliamentary delegations. Your predecessor this morning—Madam Deputy Speaker—is a long-standing serving member of the CPA executive and will be chairing the women's parliamentary meeting at the IPU conference in September as part of the centenary activities. I also wish to welcome the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) to this debate. I have been corresponding with her because we are anxious to bring as many women parliamentarians as possible into the wider international dialogue provided through the IPU.

I wish briefly to deal with some of the activities relevant to both organisations, and I shall explain why they have been singled out in the Bill. The 1988 report of the executive committee of the United Kingdom branch of the CPA highlights the thrust and purpose of the organisation and the way in which it has built on its long establishment since 1911 when it was born—as the British Empire Parliamentary Association.

During the 37th parliamentary seminar in 1988, the United Kingdom played host to delegates from 22 Commonwealth legislatures, among whom where six presiding or deputy presiding officers and three Ministers. The seminars in London and Canterbury attracted a great deal of interest, and much valuable work was carried out. The parallel activity of a Commonwealth parliamentary visit later in the year attracted 20 legislatures. It gave Commonwealth parliamentarians an opportunity not only to meet their fellow parliamentarians in both British Houses of Parliament, but to visit Oxford, Birmingham and Edinburgh.

In all the CPA's wide international activities in 1988, we cannot ignore the fact that many of them were directed towards the recognition of Australia in its bicentennial year. To that end, the 34th Commonwealth parliamentary conference was held in Australia's splendid new Parliament building in Canberra. Those of us from the CPA and the IPU who were privileged to attend a number of events during the bicentennial, thanks to our Australian parliamentary colleagues, will recognise that one of the most rewarding aspects of the development of the CPA has been the growth not only of other Commonwealth Parliaments but their commitment to the CPA and their willingness to keep in touch and work with parliamentarians throughout the Commonwealth, and especially those in the United Kingdom.

Others may wish to say more about the CPA, but, as chairman of the executive of the British group of the IPU, I shall concentrate on that organisation—not only in discussing our status along with the CPA, but our direct funding relationship with the Government and our willingness to volunteer for public accountability.

1 pm

I first presented this Bill—supported by the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), the hon. Members for Tooting (Mr. Cox) and for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) and my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) and, in the earlier stages, my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith)—because, like them, I felt that the suggestion that either organisation was some kind of travel club should be countered head-on.

Over the years we have become used to the media idea that any attempt on the part of Members of Parliament to become better informed, to maintain a dialogue and to be in touch with Parliaments around the world is a joyride. Of course it has many pleasurable aspects, but that description is a travesty of the work that is actually done. The IPU deals with 112 countries, and must maintain relationships with those countries through the use of some 10 working languages in addition to English and French, the official languages of the IPU. It is a highly sophisticated organisation, involving parliamentarians from both Houses who must be well briefed. Both organisations are well served by small but skilled secretariats.

We are especially conscious that, particularly in our conference work in distant places, we draw considerably on the contribution of the learned Clerks. Of additional significance to the IPU is the work that they do twice a year, in parallel with us, at the conference of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament. Both learned Clerks and parliamentarians play their part in our bilateral relations with those 112 countries, and have the opportunity to exchange notes.

The "travel club" idea is nonsense. That is clear when we consider the implications of the 1984 visit of Mr. Gorbachev, as he then was, to the United Kingdom, and appreciate the seriousness with which other countries have approached the IPU's work over many years. That applies particularly to the Third world and eastern Europe. When Mr. Gorbachev came to this country in 1984——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The debate is becoming very wide. I am waiting for the hon. Gentleman to tell us why the words in the Lords amendment should be inserted in the Bill. So far, he has not done so.

Mr. Marshall: As always, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I bow to any ruling that you may make. I am simply trying to demonstrate the special nature of the two organisations, and to explain why they should be singled out for recognition and public accountability.

Part of the grant in aid mechanism in the Bill is devoted to expenditures that would allow, for example, a Russian delegation to visit this country in response to an invitation such as that tendered in 1984. I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with your usual benevolence, will entirely understand why I single out that visit. It was a fascinating example of a parliamentary organisation's establishing links which, in this instance, have led to a continuing dialogue as a result of the subsequent elevation of Mr. Gorbachev to higher things.

In 1986, funding of the kind that will be allowed in future under the Bill was provided to allow a delegation from the British Parliament to visit the Soviet Union, led by my noble Friend Lord Whitelaw and the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey). That ability to vary the compositions of delegation reflects another way in which the grant in aid provision will bring together not only Parliament but Ministers and Opposition Front Bench spokesmen. The Bill's grant in aid provision rightly reflects Parliament's willingness to assist the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen of the day to play an active role.

[Mr. Marshall]

That is why I paid particular tribute earlier to the hon. Member for Swansea, East, who serves on the executives of both organisations and who, despite his onerous responsibilities as an Opposition Front Bencher, clearly sees his IPU duties as an important part of his work. We welcome that.

I shall touch briefly on one or two other aspects of the IPU's other work. There has been recent mention of the proposed British-Irish parliamentary body, about which a more formal announcement will, we hope, be made shortly. It will consolidate our continuing and long-standing dialogues, which take the form of exchange visits and conferences with our Irish parliamentary colleagues. For 23 years, the IPU's dialogue with the Guatemalan Parliament was Britain's only link with that country. My hon. Friend the Minister nods, because on other occasions he has been good enough to recognise that maintaining links by the public funding of parliamentarians has in a number of cases led directly to the restoration of what might be called normal international relations.

At the IPU's centenary conference in September there will not only be debates about problems affecting the peaceful use of space, about world food, population and indebtedness but an opportunity for bilateral dialogues with many countries in addition to the conference proceedings themselves. In that connection, those of us who were responsible for bringing the People's Republic of China into the IPU will recognise the opportunity that that conference will provide for particularly timely and significant discussions with Chinese parliamentarians.

One could cite many other examples of the work that is in hand and which is continuing. The Argentinian dialogue has been maintained when, for various reasons, the Government have been unable to continue it themselves. It can fairly be said that the changes to the Bill will highlight the determination of both bodies to continue a process that has developed over many years. In the case of the IPU, I suggest that it is not unreasonable to back President Gorbachev's arguments in his book "Perestroika", to the effect that a factor in international diplomacy is a parliamentary link. It is that parliamentary diplomacy which is highlighted by the Bill.

The Bill reaches the parts that Governments cannot reach, and one cannot avoid drawing the conclusion that, from time to time, it is useful to one's country to show people from outside it the constructive work that Parliament undertakes—drawing as of necessity it must, on the support and involvement of right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House. I always find it particularly fascinating to observe how parliamentarians from this House and from the other place work together when they are thousands of miles from home. Perhaps that is a lesson for us all back here.

Finally, I refer to the work of the other place in presenting the amendments before this House today. We are very much obliged to Viscount Montgomery of Alamein for having piloted the amendments through the other place. He was supported by Lady David, an executive member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Further support came from Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos, the Official Leader of the Opposition in the other place. I am grateful also for the support of Lord Lloyd of Kilgerran, of the Minister of State for Defence Procurement and of the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The proposals that they have endorsed have met with widespread support both from the Government and from all political parties.

In commending this group of amendments to the House, I reflect on the fact that later amendments will be consequential. For the convenience of the House I am trying to encompass as much of the argument as I can in the debate on the first group of amendments.

The Bill, and the amendments, are a small but important step towards trying, even if it is only once in every 100 years, to go public on the kind of work that we do in private, away from the glare of publicity. I hope that it puts into context the real essence of much of our parliamentary work. I pay tribute to all those who have sustained the work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Whatever work we may embark on during the next 100 years—for example, in the release of political prisoners, in drugs control or fighting terrorism—I feel certain that the strength and support that we have enjoyed until now will continue to be a feature of our parliamentary life. In that spirit, I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): I warmly associate myself with the remarks of the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall), which dealt with an ideal objective. As he said, the aims and objectives of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association are to achieve an all-party approach to vast international problems. He referred to the purposeful work being done by the two organisations. It has led to the creation of what we call a dialogue of diplomacy. The exchange of views, which has taken place over many years now, has had an influence in the corridors of power in many countries. I hope that implementation of the aims and objectives of the amendments will be as effective and as long-standing as the two associations hope.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I support what my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) has said about the Bill. We are happy to support it and to give it a fair wind. It is a useful measure. All hon. Members are well aware of the important work done by the IPU and the CPA. The measure will help to bring out into the open some of the valuable work that they do.

I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) when he spoke to the amendments. He made some very valid points. I accept that there are technicalities which make the position of the other organisations to which the amendments refer—the WEU, the Council of Europe and the NATO Assembly—somewhat different. As we all know those organisations provide valuable sources of contact between parliamentarians and have done some useful work over a number of years and continue to do so.

I note with interest what the hon. Gentleman said about the Bill's particular relevance to Opposition Members, and I pay tribute to my hon. Friends who have been associated with the hon. Gentleman in his efforts today. I should put it on record that the Opposition value the contacts that those organisations provide, which can be maintained over a number of years and lead to a great deal of insight into the concerns and special situations of our parliamentary colleagues in many different parts of the world. I support the measure and give it fair wind.

1.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Eggar): May I say on behalf of the Government how delighted we are to have the opportunity to discuss the Bill this afternoon. I pay a warm tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) who consistently, quietly and over a long time has managed to surmount and avoid all the various obstacles that have confronted him—both procedural and imposed by Whitehall for various arcane reasons that neither he nor I fully understand—and to get the Bill back here. That is a considerable achievement. I would have said that he has done so single-handedly, had I not heard the speeches by Opposition Members and had I not read with great interest and heard about the debate in another place.

My hon. Friend paid tribute to Viscount Montgomery and Members in another place, who as members of the executive committee of the IPU or the CPA have contributed to the smooth passage of the Bill.

I was delighted that my hon. Friend drew the attention of the House to the presence in the Chamber of my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Mr. Durant), who has managed to combine his unheard activity on the Front Bench with splendid chairmanship of the CPA. I, too, pay tribute to that.

The Government have no problem with the amendments suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel. I offer him an apology as advice that he received on the original drafting of the Bill proved subsequently to be incorrect and led to the need to introduce the amendments in the other place and to bring them back here.

It is fitting that the Bill should be getting a very strong wind behind it in the House in the centenary year of the IPU. I know how very hard my hon. Friend has worked in gathering together the various strands that will make the conference to be held in London in September a unique and uniquely successful event. I am delighted that Mr. Speaker and his colleagues, including Madam Deputy Speaker, will be closely associated with the centenary events in September.

The hon. Members for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) and for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) have rightly and understandably expressed the importance that we attach to the exchange of parliamentarians, both within the Commonwealth and in the context of the CPA——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister's remarks are wide of the narrow terms of the Lords amendment that we are supposed to be discussing. I very much hope that he will get back to it.

Mr. Eggar: I appreciate your concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we should remain in order, and I will certainly endeavour to do so.

We are talking about the substance of the Bill. The effect of the amendments is to limit the compass of the Bill to the IPU and the CPA. We very much regret that, for technical reasons, the other organisations must be excluded from the Bill. My hon. Friend has explained the reason for that. As a result of the amendments, we are left with the Bill mentioning the CPA and the IPU. The work that those two organisations do in the exchange of parliamentarians of all parties and of all member countries of the CPA and the IPU is widely welcomed and recognised. That is why the Bill should be introduced and why the two organisations should be mentioned. There should be an obligation on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to come to the House every year with the names of the organisations covered by the Bill, namely the CPA and the IPU, and the amounts of money that are being made available by the Government to fund them.

The exchange of parliamentarians is to be widely welcomed. My hon. Friend has already mentioned the importance of continued dialogue with parliamentarians from Guatemala and the existing dialogue with parliamentarians in Argentina. He drew attention to the important visit by Mr. Gorbachev, as he then was, when he came here under the auspices of the IPU. Examples such as those justify the expenditure of public money on those two organisations.

I thank you for your tolerance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I thank all hon. Members who have contributed to the debate. Again I pay tribute to the tremendous work done by my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel on getting the Bill this far. I have no hesitation in welcoming the amendments.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 5 agreed to.

Schedule

REGISTER OF ORGANISATIONS

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 2, leave out line 4.

Mr. Michael Marshall: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 3 and 4.

I remind the House that the previous debate has substantially covered a good deal of the ground of these amendments. It was in that respect that I showed tolerance to the House.

Mr. Marshall: In the light of what you have said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not my intention to detain the House unduly. The amendments are consequential. They delete three organisations: the Council of Europe, the North Atlantic Assembly and the Western European Union. The reasons for the difference between those organisations and those that remain in the Bill, the CPA and the IPU, are now apparent to the House. Looking to the next century of IPU, I should like to see an opportunity to increase and improve co-operation and collaboration between the IPU and the CPA, the two organisations which will formally be recognised in the Bill. However, I would not wish to rule out any links that could be maintained with the other three organisations to which, in a sense, we are sadly saying farewell in statutory terms.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 3 and 4 agreed to.

Citizens' Compensation Bill

[As amended in the Standing Committee, considered.]

Clause 2

BEREAVEMENT DAMAGES

1.24 pm

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): I beg to move amendment No. 12, in page 1, line 23, after 'parents,' insert

'provided that the deceased was a minor who never married.'

It is right to set the background to the Bill before charging straight in to a consideration of the amendment. Clause 2 extends the categories of people who would be entitled to bereavement damages. Bereavement damages are damages payable purely for the grief suffered because of a person's death. They must be distinguished from damages that are payable to those who are dependent on the person who has died. I stress that the damages referred to in the Bill are damages to compensate for grief.

One can take the view that it is degrading to human nature to turn the grief that one feels at bereavement into money. Indeed, I take that view. However, bereavement damages have been well established for a long time. Because, as the law of our country stands at the moment, it is accepted that there should be bereavement damages, we should decide to whom those damages should be payable.

As I have said, I take the view that bereavement damages are not justifiable because payment for grief is something that I cannot understand. I made that point on Second Reading and that view is generally accepted, but not by everybody. I find it difficult to express what the death of a person is worth because of the grief suffered. If someone close to one dies, no money can compensate for the loss of that person.

However, if we accept bereavement damages, it follows not only that the class of person who is entitled to those damages should be severely restricted, but that the amount of money available to those people should be severely restricted also. Any amount of bereavement damages that is more than a token or a nominal small amount would make one feel that one had profited by the death of the person who had died. That would be a bad thing.

If one is restricting the class of people who would be entitled to bereavement damages, one must consider the existing law and the people who are entitled. It is a pretty odd list. The statute sets out that bereavement damages should be for the benefit

> "(a) of the wife or husband of the deceased; and
> (b) where the deceased was a minor who was never married—
> (i) of his parents, if he was legitimate; and
> (ii) of his mother, if he was illegitimate.

Today that sounds pretty odd because it makes an invidious and unpleasant distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children when in our other legislation we are tending to reduce those distinctions as much as possible and are trying to remove any stigma that there might once have been because of the acts of one's parents over which one had no control.

It sounds an odd list and there could well be some justification for changing it. However, one must do so according to the list of people who might most arguably suffer by the loss of their parents. Obviously, one cannot say that a father of a legitimate child will suffer any more than the father of an illegitimate child. There are difficulties under the present list of proving that the father of an illegitimate child is actually the father. However, with people living together outside marriage more and more, that is becoming a decreasing difficulty.

1.30 pm

We must categorise the list of people entitled to bereavement damages in one way or another. Any categorisation of such people will be fraught with difficulties. One difficulty will be that some people whom most of us think should be included will be left out, and those whom people think should be left out will be included. Our approach should be to recognise that there are major difficulties about that area of the law and that, whatever we do, we are unlikely to get it finally perfectly right.

Any extension of the list of those who would be entitled to bereavement damages should be done slowly and gradually. It should, perhaps, lag a little behind public opinion rather than leaping ahead of it. Our proper approach should be to look at the list of those who are entitled now to bereavement damages, and then to consider which person is most obviously left out. That was dealt with in another place in 1982 by Lord Mishcon, when he moved an amendment to the Administration of Justice Bill. He said words with which I have to agree. He said:

> "there are several categories of people who are entitled in regard to the bereavement claim but, as I tried to submit on a previous occasion, the one obvious claimant has been omitted. It is the unmarried minor child, who one thinks is possibly the person who will the most miss the parent from the point of view of actual loss, only in the sense . . . sometimes a surviving spouse can find some kind of relief, contentment and indeed happiness, in a remarriage, whereas a child can never regain a parent who has been lost."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 4 May 1982; Vol. 429, c. 1109.]

Some people ask why I have put forward the amendment to limit the increase to a minor who has never married. My reason for doing so is that the minor who has never married is probably the person who is most likely to suffer the loss of a parent. Those who are older tend to suffer less, perhaps because of other relationships that they are able to form—more open and less exclusive relationships than one naturally has with one's parent when one is a child. I suggest that this is the right way in which to limit the clause.

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): The hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) is at least consistent in his criticisms of personal injury compensation and the category of persons who receive it. On Second Reading he made similar points and I and other hon. Members tried to reconcile them. We have never denied that the amount of money payable in such circumstances is incalculable. We have said consistently that there must be recognition of that fact, because recognition has been given in other elements of our law, when dealing, for example, with a person's injured reputation. One cannot compare the £300,000 and £1 million awards that are given by the courts for injured reputation with those given for injured bodies—or the psychological impact, which brings about nervousness and in many other ways affects people who are bereaved because of accidents.

Some people argue that because the loss that a bereaved person suffers is beyond compensation, there should be no award. As I have asked many times before, how can we

adequately compensate people for the loss of a member of their family? Today I have been given some illustrations of the sort of claimants who should be included—the categories that the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford talked about. If a bereaved person believes that financial compensation will help him recover from the tragedy, he should be allowed to seek compensation. It should be his choice to decide whether or not to claim and how to use it.

I wish to fill in the background to the Bill as that is necessary to understand the amendments. When I introduced my Bill I received massive all-party support, which was exciting. Some 260 hon. Members committed themselves to supporting the Bill through organisations, mainly the Citizen Action Compensation Campaign. Many hon. Members of high regard and great reputation supported the Bill.

It is with some regret that I risk placing on record my anger and dismay at the Government's conduct throughout the Bill's passage. I was forced by a lack of time for private Member's Bills severely to curtail the Bill. I did so openly, accepting in good faith what Ministers said to me in Committee, in order to give the Bill the best possible chance of reaching the statute book. I have given the Government every opportunity to agree to what is now a simple measure. I took four clauses out of the Bill to accommodate them and to avoid dividing the all-party support. Through negotiation and mutual respect for each other's view we could have retained a sensible and just portion of the Bill, which would have received the unanimous approval of the House.

The Bill would have a substantial effect on the quality of life of the injured and bereaved. I accept that the Minister has tried to accommodate actuarial problems, but unfortunately he seems to have set his face against extending the categories of people entitled to bereavement damages. That is mirrored by the amendments of the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford.

Recent disasters have illustrated the urgent need for a review of existing law. One of my constituents died at Hillsborough. He was 18 and his parents will not receive a single penny because of the artificial distinctions in the law. I have since learnt that another family is in the same position. Their son was two months over 18.

The problem does not affect only those who have, unfortunately, been caught up in the recent spate of disasters. A pensioner was devastated by the loss of her 40-year-old daughter who suffered from Down's syndrome. She died after a locum doctor had wrongly administered heroin to her as a painkiller. That pensioner's claim is worth £80 for funeral expenses. It is highly likely that legal aid will be withdrawn because of the potential costs of her action. Her barrister has said that she feels that

"the core has been taken out of her life".

The mother feels that the doctor:

"took her life and ruined mine"

That women is being denied access to justice. That is why this issue is so crucial and I cannot understand the lack of compassion displayed about such examples.

People caught in the trap are systematically denied access to justice. In many cases such action is the only way in which people can hold the person responsible to account, but the Minister will not move on this. Why should a child be prevented from claiming for the death of its parents? Surely a child feels such a loss much more than anyone else, as parents mean the world to their children. Some people argue that because a child is financially dependent on its parents it will be able to make a claim. What if the parents are unemployed or chose to stay at home to bring up the family? In those circumstances a child may not be able to claim. Further consideration should be given to the cases that I have described.

My Bill was designed to solve such problems and, by doing so, it would have implemented the recommendations of the Pearson royal commission which was established specifically to examine compensation for personal injury. It recommended that an unmarried minor child should be able to recover damages.

My Bill would also tackle the inconsistency between English and Scottish law. It is absurd that a child who is most likely to feel the pain and suffering that I have described should be prevented from making a claim. The Administration of Justice Act 1982 provides a much wider scope for claiming damages. It states that the spouse, parents, children, a person accepted by the deceased as a child and any person who, immediately before the deceased's death, lived with the deceased as husband or wife may claim.

Why have one law for Scotland and one for England? That is inconsistent and it deprives people of a common form of justice. My Bill would have brought equity to the four countries of the United Kingdom. If the bereaved believe that compensation will help them to recover from the accidental death of a relative that feeling should be recognised.

In Committee we discussed the amount of compensation to be awarded. I am sure that the Minister, with the best intentions in the world, will make a statement and, I hope, a commitment, on the Government's recognition that bereavement damages should be increased. I await to see whether he is prepared, in any shape or form to dot the i's and cross the t's after the commitment has been made regarding the amount concerned. We have received hundreds of letters, especially from the——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Is not the hon. Gentleman anticipating later amendments? It is hard to relate his remarks to the amendment under discussion.

1.45 pm

Mr. Cunliffe: If you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, remember, I mentioned that I had to go through some of the Bill's background to try to illustrate what the amendment meant in the broadest sense of the word, and I shall try to do that.

The hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford has referred to the category which we are describing. The Bill's sponsors and I feel deeply about that. There is another category of person which should be included. I know of a case in which a family lost their 16-year-old daughter when a coach jumped a red light and hit a van in which she was travelling. The driver was prosecuted, convicted, fined £500 and had his licence suspended for a year. The mother cannot believe that the claim was worth only £3,500.

I wait with anticipation for the Minister to make some remarks about the stage we have reached and the confusion which has now arisen due to attempts by him and his Department to introduce legislation on the actuarial line. Unfortunately, that cannot be discussed too much in the House simply because of Mr. Speaker's ruling.

[Mr. Cunliffe]

Throughout this period there has been a degree of confusion—I would not say trickery or deceit—which has misled some of us. We thought that there were some aspects of the Bill towards which the Government were sympathetic and would seek to support through some other procedure. My Bill has, in the main, been hijacked all along the line. I am sorry to have to say that I do not believe that, so far, my Bill has been treated under the Queensbury rules. It has been totally decimated. I deeply regret that the Government have sought not to recognise some of the valid arguments put forward by my associates and me in support of the Bill.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House will join me in expressing deep sympathy with my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) on his bereavement this week and our understanding of his difficulties in preparing for today's debates on his Bill.

The amendment is the first of a series tabled by the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) which, taken together, would kill this important Bill stone dead. They are almost all deeply objectionable amendments and are widely seen as both hurtful and offensive to many victims of extreme adversity who look to this House for hope and for practical help. They include the families of those who died in the Bradford fire, at Hillsborough and in other recent disasters. That the compensation they can expect under the law as it now stands is unacceptable to the British people is borne out by the voluntary offers in the Zeebrugge, King's Cross and Clapham disasters of almost three times the legal maximum. Any figure will be arbitrary, but the House must now listen to what more and more bereaved families are saying to us about the derisory levels of compensation available to them under the law, which this Bill seeks importantly to amend. My hon. Friend the Member for Leigh has been highly co-operative in his approach to the Solicitor-General's suggestions about changing the original drafting of the Bill. They were mostly extremely painful suggestions to my hon. Friend in that they involved the deletion of important sections of his Bill. He hoped, and was fully entitled to hope, that his reward would be an agreed measure of more limited but still valuable help to people who suffer bereavement or disability with inadequate compensation.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I know that the right hon. Gentleman would not wish to mislead the House. However, any impression that any deletions from the Bill and the dropping of the first four clauses owes anything to a suggestion from me is mistaken and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will recognise that.

Mr. Morris: My hon. Friend the Member for Leigh thought that he was seeking to accommodate the difficulties put to him by the Solicitor-General and some of his hon. Friends. It was not my hon. Friend's intention to remove from his Bill any of its very important provisions and principles which were sacrificed. He felt that he was co-operating with the Solicitor-General. He has made it clear this afternoon that he is angered and dismayed about the loss of very important parts of the Bill as originally drafted. Instead of any reward for my hon. Friend, it is now proposed from the Conservative Benches that this Bill —already seriously weakened by amendments which he felt forced to concede—should either be effectively destroyed or talked out today. The Bill has been boned and boiled down almost to the point of invisibility and is now to be buried.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Morris: I will give way later. It is an utterly disgraceful story of contempt for our efforts to help needful people in which the Solicitor-General can surely take no pride.

The Solicitor-General: I shall confine myself to simply saying that the right hon. Gentleman is making unjustified allegations. The central part of the Bill—it is no longer part of the Bill—was dropped by the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe), for whom I have the greatest sympathy, because of the time constraints which inevitably affect a private Member's Bill which tries to deal with a wide subject on which there is no agreement. It was never suggested that there was agreement on the compensation board. The right hon. Gentleman will have done me the courtesy of reading my long speech on Second Reading in which I made that perfectly clear. I have taken great trouble to meet the Bill's sponsors and discuss this matter. They know and recognise that. It is not right for the right hon. Gentleman to say what he does but I shall expand on that when I speak more fully.

Mr. Morris: I heard the Solicitor-General's speech on Second Reading. It followed my speech on that day and I listened with very great care to all that he said. My hon. Friend the Member for Leigh did not want to drop the compensation board. He was reluctant to sacrifice any part of his Bill. My hon. Friend's position was that his Bill was already inadequate to meet all the problems it addressed. He was in fact hoping that the Solicitor-General might come forward with helpful additions to what was being proposed in the Bill. I can tell the Solicitor-General that my hon. Friend in sacrificing very important provisions of the Bill, did so in the expectation that there would be an agreed measure. He hoped to see his Bill, or some version of this very important measure, on the statute book. I am saying now that there is scant likelihood that, at the end of the day, anything will emerge to help the people he is concerned to assist.

It was a humanitarian initiative, which has been frustrated by the debates that we have had here and upstairs. Even as originally drafted, the Bill was but a first step in the right direction, yet it is a step too far for the Solicitor-General and the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford.

It must be strongly emphasised in this debate that the Bill, as originally drafted, attracted widespread support from over 50 national legal, medical and voluntary organisations. They include the Haemophilia Society, the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, MIND, the National League of the Blind and Disabled and the Spinal Injuries Association. They are all now being told that they were asking too much, and to put up with existing law, with which even judges themselves are manifestly unhappy. Listen again, for example, to Mr. Justice Hirst's challenge to this House. He said, in reference to the Opren case, that both the assessors and the

courts had been obliged to base their awards on the levels of damages established by legal precedent, which is binding in law. He went on:

"There is nothing wrong with critics questioning or condemning these levels, so long as they recognise that only parliament can change them. . . . So long as the present levels remain in force, the Courts have no alternative but to apply them."

That was widely read as a direct challenge to parliament to untie the hands of judges. My hon. Friend's Bill——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am afraid that the right hon. Gentleman's speech is wide of the terms of the amendment before the House, which deals with the exclusion of unmarried minors from the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. Morris: I am of course going to speak about exclusions. I wanted to remind the House of the very important statement made by Mr. Justice Hirst. He was delivering a pointed challenge to the House. It is a statement that deserves a reply from the Solicitor-General as well as from me.

In regard to amending the extensions of the categories of claimants I believe, with my hon. Friend, that it is totally unacceptable for the Minister to have refused to budge on this issue. His stance has clearly encouraged the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford to table what can only be described as amendments which aim to destroy the essential principles of my hon. Friend's Bill. As my hon. Friend said, recent disasters have illustrated the urgent need for a review of the existing law.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I hope that, on reflection and on re-reading my speech on Second Reading the right hon. Gentleman will realise that I needed no encouragement, and that I did not think that the Bill met the concerns that he, quite rightly, now expresses.

Mr. Morris: I speak with some experience of sitting on both sides of the House. I am certain that the Solicitor-General's stance must have given encouragement to his hon. Friends. After all, they support the Government. I regret very much that we are in the position now of losing a measure that is extremely important on humanitarian grounds.

The Solicitor-General: The right hon. Gentleman must take stock. Nothing to which he can point suggests that I encouraged the dropping of the first four clauses of the Bill or that I encouraged any extension of the categories of people who are entitled to claim bereavement damages. My position is that which the House agreed after a full debate in 1982, at which time the right hon. Gentleman was a Member. I have always upheld that position and I have never given any sign that the Government would broaden the categories. I have always said that we thought that the categories chosen in 1982 were right. I have had no suggestion that the clauses were dropped on the understanding that we would broaden the categories, and I know that the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) would not make any such suggestion.

2 pm

Mr. Morris: I said that my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh did not want to lose any part of the provisions in the Bill as originally drafted. I shall give way to him, so that he can explain his attitude on this important matter.

Mr. Cunliffe The signal was quite clear. At one stage we were told, in essence, that the Government would steamroller the Bill if the compensation advisory board was kept intact. It was suggested that we could discuss other elements of the Bill that would give some recognition to the principles that I have been trying to establish. For example, on the question of bereavement damages, the Solicitor-General constantly said that the Government would consider uprating them. That is why I asked in my speech whether he would dot the i's and cross the t's on the financial awards that the Government would be prepared to accept.

The question of time arose in Committee because this is the last Friday when private Members' Bills can be debated. If I had chosen to debate all the clauses, the Government would have adopted the tactic of talking me out. I thought that the Government were showing some sympathetic signs, and with respect to both the Solicitor-General and my right hon. Friend, I certainly did not think that there was any confusion. Although no assurances were given, there were certainly suggestions that the Government would be helpful. Indeed, the word "helpful" was used constantly during our discussions.

Mr. Morris: The Solicitor-General has heard what my hon. Friend has said. He clearly had the impression that in trying to co-operate with the Solicitor-General he would arrive at an agreed measure. My hon. Friend has not dissimulated in any way. He is a passionately concerned about those who could have been helped by the Bill as originally drafted.

The Solicitor-General: May I join the strands together? I said that I hope to be extremely helpful to the hon. Gentleman in three ways, and I am sure that he would acknowledge that. First, I said in Committee that we would consult with a view to uprating the level of bereavement damages, which has not been updated since 1982. When I come to reply to the debate on these amendments, I intend to confirm the Government's position on that.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman and I together considered ways to make a small but significant advance in the use of actuarial tables approved by the Government Actuary for compensation claims. It is only the understandable rules of the House that prevent us from dealing with that matter today. In fact, through the kindness of Mr. Speaker, we raised that matter earlier on a point of order. When I reply to the debate, I shall, within the rules of order, briefly clarify the position.

Thirdly, we hope to make some progress on a feasibility study for a no-fault compensation scheme for minor road accidents. I hope that there will be a little time available to debate that.

I have always sought to use this valuable private Members' legislative time to be as constructive as possible, but when I have not been able to do that, I have always made the position absolutely clear. I hope that hon. Members will accept that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I very much hope that we can now get back to considering amendment No. 12.

Mr. Morris: I shall reply only briefly to that intervention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since I fully agree with you about relevance. My hon. Friend the Member for Leigh approached me—as a Member of Parliament who

[Mr. Morris]

had taken three private Members' Bills to the statute book —about timing. He would have liked to take an earlier day, but delayed in an attempt to secure agreement with the Government.

Mr. Cunliffe: I did so simply because 5 May had been chosen as the date for the Committee stage to begin. To benefit from the flexible approach to the principles of the Bill that the Government were showing at the time and that the Solicitor-General has now evinced, I delayed until the final day for private Members' Bills.

Mr. Morris: By delaying, of course, my hon. Friend reduced his chances of legislating on this important matter.

Let me return to the extension of claimant categories. I strongly agree with my hon. Friend that people need to be able to hold to account those responsible for their bereavements. Surely the Solicitor-General will accept the force of that argument when he replies. Accountability is the central issue: if people feel that someone must be held accountable for the death of a close relation, they should not be separated from justice by artificial barriers and distinctions and also, indeed, by the law's delay, which has been strongly criticised by the Lord Chancellor himself.

I hope that the House will reject the amendment without too much more delay today.

The Solicitor-General: The purpose of the amendment is to provide that, in respect of a parent's claim for the loss of a child, the deceased must have been a minor who never married. The amendment—which we are formally discussing, as you have reminded us, Mr. Deputy Speaker —would retain the current provisions of the Fatal Accidents Act 1976, as amended, and the Administration of Justice Act 1982.

In supporting the amendment, I am maintaining what has been the Government's position throughout. I shall return to my reasons—briefly, because I think that the House wants to proceed to the debate on no-fault compensation schemes—but I should like to make a couple of points first.

Your indulgence has been sought, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to allow discussion of bereavement compensation levels. I should make it clear, as I did in Committee, that seven years have elapsed since the level of bereavement damages was fixed at £3,500, whether one claimant or 10 sought damages. The Government accept that there is a good case now for considering whether a higher level would be appropriate, and I am pleased to tell the House, as I told the Committee, that the Lord Chancellor is to hold consultations on whether to raise the level.

Mr. Cunliffe: Will the consultations be with the organisations which have given me such invaluable help with my Bill? Will public and voluntary organisations, victim support groups and bodies such as CRUSE be consulted?

The Solicitor-General: There is no limit to the categories of interested parties that may be consulted, and I see no reasons why organisations such as those that the hon. Gentleman mentions should not be included among them. I hope that interested persons will read of our debate and that those holding views on how the uprating should take place will make them known. As a result of the hon. Gentleman's intervention, they have an opportunity to participate in the consultations. I hope also that appropriate bodies will be approached for that purpose. They may include insurance interests. I refer not only to insurance companies but to those who are insured as motorists or against household accidents, and in all our multifarious roles as citizens.

Once those consultations have been completed, a further announcement will be made about any appropriate increase. We are thinking of a time scale that is not overlong, and hope to make substantial progress toward an announcement during the course of this year. I hope that is of comfort to the hon. Member for Leigh.

The debate really concerns categories of claimants. I hope that the House accepts that I have never given any encouragement for believing that the Government will accept any widening of the categories of claimants as opposed to an increase in the level of bereavement damages. I am glad to see the hon. Member for Leigh nodding, because I would not wish there to be any misunderstanding. I have sought to make progress in the other areas that I mentioned in my earlier intervention.

I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's co-operation and for the constructive discussions that I have held with representatives of the Citizens Action Compensation Campaign. They have been placed in the difficulty that confronts anyone seeking to operate through a private Member's Bill—shortage of time. They took the decision that they considered to be right, but it should not be thought, and it would not be correct to say, that I led them on to do anything other than that which I have clearly described today. I sought to make progress to the utmost of my ability and, as the hon. Gentleman knows, in considerable detail.

I turn to my reasons why the amendment should be accepted. The existing clause 2(2) goes beyond anything recommended by the Law Commission or the Pearson Commission. Those two great commissions did not agree. They held different views, just as Scotland did. Nevertheless, neither of those two great commissions, which we asked to apply their minds to the categories of citizens who should be entitled to claim bereavement damages went as wide as clause 2.

The amendment will revert to the existing provision in respect of the age of eligible children. The reasons for accepting the amendment are compelling. To proceed without it will give parents the right to bereavement damages whatever the age of their children. Of course difficult judgments have to be made when legislating. If a son or daughter is a few weeks below the age of 18 rather than an adult just a few weeks older, a sad case can be made. Unamended, however, the clause would give parents the right to bereavement damages whether their offspring was 30, 40, 50, 60, or whatever age at the time of death.

The amendment would re-instate the present law, which introduces a proviso that is in two parts. The children in respect of whom a claim is made must be minors, and they must be minors who never married. A minor who married will have developed less close links with his parents because the centre of his affection will have been his new family. That point was brought out by my noble and learned Friend the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham, when that aspect was debated in Committee on the Administration of Justice Act 1982, col. 1298 of the House of Lords *Hansard* for 30 March 1982.

2.15 pm

It is also important to emphasise that children may have a loss of dependency claim. I do not wish to prolong the debate on this amendment because I know that hon. Members want to deal with the next one. For those reasons, I ask the House to accept the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4

COMPENSATION WITHOUT PROOF OF FAULT

Mr. Arbuthnot: I beg to move amendment No. 29, in page 2, line 41, leave out

'for personal injury arising out of a road accident'

and insert

'to which this section applies'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 32, in page 2, line 42, leave out

'arising out of a road accident'.

No. 20, in page 2, line 42, leave out 'a road accident' and insert

'an accident which has occurred owing to the presence of a motor vehicle or trailer on a road'.

No. 21, in page 2, line 43, leave out 'shall be compensated' and insert

'the user of the vehicle shall be liable to make compensation'.

No. 31, in page 2, line 45, leave out subsection (2).

No. 22, in page 2, line 45, leave out 'exceeds a level which' and insert

'is for a sum greater than £1,000 or such higher sum as'.

No. 23, in page 2, line 46, after 'or', insert

'is in respect of a type of accident'.

No. 24, in page 3, line 2, leave out from 'secure' to 'subsection (1) above' and insert

'that the user shall not be liable under subsection (1) unless there is in force in relation to the use of the vehicle a policy of insurance in respect of third party risks.'.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Amendment No. 29 deals with the definition of a road accident, among other matters. Clause 4 introduces the concept of no-fault compensation. I have a great deal of sympathy with the hon. Member for Leigh, (Mr. Cunliffe) who suggested that the Bill has been hijacked. Whether or not one likes the concept of no-fault compensation, and I do not, one must accept that the wording of the clause should be clear. It suggests that there should be no-fault compensation in the case of minor road accidents. In Committee the hon. Member for Leigh said some very telling and critical things about it, with which I entirely agree.

Mr. Cunliffe: The hon. Gentleman says that I said some very critical and telling things about it. In what context does he suggest that I made those comments?

Mr. Arbuthnot: I was just about to repeat one of his remarks—that the clause contained no definition of a road accident. That is a crucial criticism of it. The Bill provides that injury in a road accident will be compensated for differently from all other injuries, regardless of whether the person injured was entirely or partly to blame for his or her injuries. The whole point of the clause is that fault should not be involved. It may sound bizarre when set out in that way, but that is the aim of the clause.

The Bill contains no definition of the phrase "road accident". If road accidents are to be treated entirely differently from other accidents, it is important for us to be sure which accidents are involved. It is important for us to know whether an air crash becomes a road accident if the aeroplane lands on a road. If a tree falls on a road and injures a pedestrian, is that a road accident? Presumably it might be if the tree fell on to a road, but not if it did not. Presumably, if the pedestrian is in the road it is a road accident, otherwise it is not. If a falling tree causes a car to crash, presumably that is a road accident, but if it has a similar effect on a tractor in a nearby field it is not a road accident. Those examples illustrate how important it is that the phrase "road accident" should be defined, and how absurd the whole concept of trying to differentiate is.

I am sorry that my amendments do not go further towards clarifying the clause. I do not think that they achieve a workable or suitable balance, but they are better than nothing. One cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. My own preference would be to have no-fault compensation, but I have said enough and I know that the hon. Member for Leigh would like to express his views.

Mr. Cunliffe: I hope that the speech by the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) was not motivated by the fact that he is a member of Lloyd's. The insurers are very much involved in the legislation that we have discussed and which might be forthcoming. I would ask him in the best possible way whether he has a direct interest in the matter.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The hon. Gentleman is well aware that I am a member of Lloyd's. I have said throughout the proceedings on the Bill that the insurers will not suffer from such a measure. The insurers will do very well out of the measure as they will simply get more business. In a sense I am speaking against myself in suggesting that the clause is not a good idea. The clause is not directly related to the insurance industry, so there is no direct need for me to declare an interest. Although I am a member of Lloyd's, I do not think that it affects my judgment.

Mr. Cunliffe: I have pointed out that in any new scheme that was introduced and inaugurated by the House, considerable time would be given for such companies to assess values, increase premiums and so on. We have discussed the matter. It was part of my Bill that the compensation advisory board would not administer any decision for about two years. That would have provided the various organisations involved with a breathing space.

It is important to understand the principles of a no-fault compensation scheme. To some extent I would welcome such a principle being established, as it would set a precedent in parliamentary history and legislation if no-fault compensation were to get a toe in the door. Many organisations such as the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Midwives and the Royal Society of Medicine would welcome some form of no-fault compensation scheme. I take some small credit for the fact that my Bill has prompted the Government to initiate a feasibility study which I believe is to be forthcoming and to accept that there is a case for considering no-fault compensation.

No-fault compensation schemes abandon the rule that an injured person has to show that someone was negligent in order to maintain compensation. It is simple and straightforward.

Mr. Alfred Morris: My hon. Friend referred to a feasibility study on no-fault liability. He has studied the

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

New Zealand scheme and others across the world. Does he agree that this moment is not for feasiblity studies but for action to relieve palpable suffering on the part of bereaved and disabled people?

Mr. Cunliffe: I am glad that my right hon. Friend has mentioned the New Zealand scheme. It is a similar scheme. It provides compensation for personal accident victims, regardless of fault. The scheme came into force on 1 April 1974. It is working. It abolishes claims for personal injuries arising directly or indirectly out of accidents and substitutes a right to compensation from a statutory corporation known as the Accident Compensation Corporation.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that a man in New Zealand, who was trying to escape from prison and fell off the perimeter fence and broke a leg, was given compensation from the Accident Compensation Corporation?

Mr. Cunliffe: I was not aware of that. The Chamber is a fount of knowledge. The purpose of our dialogue in this place is to acquaint hon. Members with knowledge and facts. The hon. Gentleman referred to an extreme case. We are talking about a principle that, in the main, has assisted hundreds of thousands of people with their legitimate rights to compensation. One can always quote the one-off selective case. Other schemes have different methods of calculation. We might have discussed that this morning when a point of order was raised about actuarial assessments. It is clear that the New Zealand scheme provides compensation benefits based on low earnings. The aim is to cushion losses and to encourage people to return to work or to be able to achieve at their highest possible level.

The source of funding is always debated in no-fault compensation schemes. It is a bone of contention in the House. There is a genuine attempt by the majority of hon. Members to try to get recognition of the principle of "no fault" embodied in our legislation. Funding is the most controversial aspect of the matter. In New Zealand there is a compulsory payroll levy on employers and the self-employed, a compulsory levy on motor vehicle owners, and general taxation which goes into a fund for non-earners, apart from those who are injured on the roads.

The House will obviously need to examine various elements. The first is minor road accidents. We could reduce the timetable in our courts by ensuring that speedy decisions and awards are made in disputed cases.

I know that the average time for bringing a personal injury case to court if it is contested is between three and five years, especially for children aged between seven and 11. If one were to take several thousand, or possibly 100,000 people out of that category, some benefit would follow. I should welcome that. Indeed, it was a point that I made strongly in Committee. It is premature if all the organisations involved have not been consulted. That was not the case put forward in Committee. We have a clear responsibility——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Friday next.

Private Members' Bills

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate in Committee on Question proposed [5 May], That clause 2 stand part of the Bill.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Debate to be resumed what day? No day named.

NATIONAL SERVICE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

HUMAN RIGHTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 October.

UNPRESCRIBED SPECTACLES (HEALTH WARNINGS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

LICENSING (LOW ALCOHOL DRINKS) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [7 April].

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

PLANNING PERMISSION (DEMOLITION OF HOUSES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

ANTI-HACKING BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

LEASEHOLD REFORM (COMMONHOLD) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

RELIGIOUS PROSECUTIONS (ABOLITION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

MISUSE OF DRUGS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): With the permission of the hon. Member in charge of the Bill——

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

RESALE OF TICKETS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Simon Hughes: With the permission of the hon. Member in charge of the Bill——

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

AIRCRAFT (FREEDOM FROM SMOKING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

PUBLIC SERVICE CONTRACT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

ABORTION (AMENDMENT OF GROUNDS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

AMUSEMENT MACHINES (PROTECTION OF CHILDREN) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

EMPTY PROPERTY AND COMMUNITY AID BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

ABORTION (TREATMENT OF NON-RESIDENT WOMEN) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

ABORTION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 27 October.

NET BOOK AGREEMENT (ABOLITION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

ABORTION (FINANCIAL BENEFITS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

ANIMAL PROTECTION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

ABORTION (RIGHT OF CONSCIENCE) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

SAFETY IN CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUNDS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

ABORTION (RIGHTS OF ANCILLARY WORKERS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

JUNIOR HOSPITAL DOCTORS (REGULATION OF HOURS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): With the permission of the sponsor, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Friday next.

Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

BURGLAR ALARMS (CONTROL) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

CONTROL OF ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE DEVICES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOLS (REGISTRATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

DEFAMATION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

TAKE AWAY FOOD (BIODEGRADABLE PACKAGING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

CAR TELEPHONES (SAFETY) BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

ENVIRONMENT CHARTER BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Simon Hughes: With the permission of the hon. Member in charge of the Bill——

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

POLITICAL HONOURS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

BRITISH NATIONALITY (HONORARY CITIZENSHIP) BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

CONTROL OF LITTER (FINES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

RIDERS OF EQUINE ANIMALS BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): With the permission of the hon. Member in charge of the Bill——

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

PUBLIC PLACES (HYGIENE) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

GREYHOUND BETTING LEVY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY (REAFFIRMATION AND LIMITS OF COMPETENCE) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN RETIREMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

PUBLIC SAFETY INFORMATION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

PROTECTION OF RESIDENTS IN RETIREMENT HOMES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

GAMING MACHINES (PROHIBITION ON USE BY PERSONS UNDER EIGHTEEN) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

RE-ENFRANCHISEMENT OF THE PEOPLE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

COAL MINING SUBSIDENCE (DAMAGE, ARBITRATION, PREVENTION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

BRITISH RACING COMMISSION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

FOOTBALL SPECTATORS (No. 2) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not printed.

Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

BAIL (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE (IMPROVED PROVISION OF SERVICES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

BANNING OF USELESS ANIMAL EXPERIMENTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

SCHIZOPHRENIA AFTER-CARE BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

CREATION OF UNITARY LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

BLASPHEMY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

ITINERANTS (CONTROL) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 27 October.

DANGEROUS DOGS BILL

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. —*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I must point out that Mr. Speaker has on a number of occasions made it clear that he deprecates the practice of taking the Committee stage without adequate notice. However, I am in the hands of the House.

Bill immediately considered in Committee: reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 75 (Third Reading) and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

REPRESENTATION ON NATIONAL PARKS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

LICENSING (AMENDMENT) BILL *[LORDS]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. —*[Mr. Cunliffe.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I know that the House will bear in mind the deprecatory words I used earlier.

Bill immediately considered in Committee: reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third Time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 75 (Third Reading) and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

COUNTING WOMEN'S UNREMUNERATED WORK BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

PREVENTION OF CHILD ABDUCTION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

POINT OF ORDER

2.41 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Through you, may I ask the Government Whips whether the Leader of the House could arrange for a statement to be made on Monday about the the petrol leak in the Dartford marshes this morning? At about 7 o'clock this morning there was a substantial petrol leak as a result of a fractured pipeline in an environmentally and ecologically sensitive area just outside Dartford. Reports suggest that the leak might have polluted the Thames and/or water and sewage. It is a sensitive area and the public are greatly concerned. The county council and the district council are involved and I believe that it is a matter on which the Leader of the House might allow a statement. I should be grateful if my request could be brought to his attention.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What the hon. Gentleman has said doubtless has been heard by those responsible.

999 Calls (South Wales)

2.42 pm

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The lifeline of 999 has served Britain well for 50 years. In the past few months in Wales public confidence in the service has been badly shaken.

Early-day motion 954 provides details of some of the life-threatening mistakes that have followed the centralising of south Wales 999 calls in Cardiff last September. Today I accuse British Telecom of undermining public trust, of downgrading the quality of the service, of putting profit before safety and of neglect and incompetence. British Telecom's bizarre defence is that the service is no worse in south Wales than in the rest of Britain, so the problem is probably a national one.

As a cost-cutting exercise, Newport and Swansea manual exchange boards were closed from 10 o'clock at night. That could not have happened without centralising 999 calls in Cardiff. Centralisation has meant deterioration. At least 300 misroutings have resulted—some comic, some nightmarish and some tragic.

An emergency message from the coastguard was twice connected to the speaking clock, then connected to Bournemouth when the coastguard wanted Barmouth. Two days ago in Gwent a caller listening to a woman being attacked and hearing her screams was told by a British Telecom operator that he was not calling from his village of Undy, but from Caerphilly, a town some 20 miles away in another county. After a two-minute delay he was connected to the wrong police station 40 miles away in Bridgend. Just 10 days' monitoring last month by Gwent ambulance service recorded five major misroutes, some of them life-threatening.

Last Friday, when I heard that I had the good fortune to have secured today's debate, I wrote to all those in professional daily contact with the new service. They all replied and I shall give a fair summary of their judgments. The Union of Communication Workers said:

"BT management is obsessed not only with cutting costs but in driving down their staff-in-post figures"

Its diagnosis is that

"the fundamental problems are brought about by defective equipment and second-rate management."

The south Wales constabulary write of initial difficulties, but it and Gwent police have had fewer problems than other services. The south Glamorgan fire and rescue service reported 100 misrouted calls in an eight-month period following the closures of Bridgend and Merthyr exchanges and 19 misrouted calls in the first five months of this year. It looks forward to the introduction of the modern digital system to deal with calls.

The mid-Glamorgan fire service concludes that its

"overall impression of the service remains that there is a lack of training and supervision of BT staff who operate the 999 service in Cardiff."

The chief fire officer of Dyfed, Mr. R. King, reports 54 calls in which misunderstandings or delays have occurred since centralisation. He writes:

"The further away the recipient of the call is from the area of origin the greater the possibility of confusion, mis-understanding and delay.

There have been occasions when the BT operator taking the emergency calls has not understood"—

this is a peculiarly Welsh problem—

"the Welsh pronunciation of a Welsh place name and passed the call through to the wrong control centre; Cwmafon has been mistaken for Carmarthen; Llanddarog exchange mistaken for Llanganog or Llangadog.

There must be an optimum level at which cost effectiveness, efficiency and safety are comprised. The fire service places a high value on safety."

Does British Telecom place the same value on safety?

Mr. T. Glossop, chief of the Gwent fire brigade writes:

"Obviously the centralisation has not been successful to date as it has failed to provide a level of service commensurate with public safety. In my view, the difficulties centre around the technology involved . . . if the centralisation had been delayed until the digital system was operational these problems would not have arisen.

It is ironic that at the same time as the 999 system is having these problems, British Telecom is advertising home security systems linked to their emergency centre aimed at a profitable area of the market. The old issue of public interest or private profit."

The west Glamorgan county fire service chief, Mr. Jim Windsor, reports 55 misroutings. He writes:

"I feel the service has been degraded to a level that is unacceptable. Prior to the move to Cardiff, British Telecom gave an assurance that misrouting of calls could not occur but this has proven to be a major problem. As a result of the misrouting of calls, the officers and staff of West Glamorgan Fire Service Control centre no longer have confidence in the service provided by British Telecom."

Mr. Porter, the chief ambulance officer of Gwent, carried out a brief period of monitoring. More than a year ago he, too, asked BT to delay centralisation until the digital system was ready. For a brief period of 11 days last month, he logged misdirected calls. Within that period he recorded the following confusions, none of which could have happened under the previous system, and would have been extremely unlikely under the future system using digital methods. On 11 June there was a call concerning a sick child at Saundersfoot in Dyfed. The call was directed to Crosskeys in Gwent, more than 100 miles away.

On 14 June a woman suffering from 60 per cent. burns after a fire had her emergency call misrouted from Cwmbran, Gwent to Mid-Glamorgan. There was a delay of 25 minutes. Perhaps I can engage the Minister's attention. That delay was attributed to the changes in the system. On 16 June after a road accident a Gwent town was confused with Ystradgynlais which is several valleys away from Gwent. On 21 June two calls were misdirected from Gwent to Powys.

Those sorry tales received great publicity in Wales, but British Telecom's public relations response has been sensationally inept. Five times British Telecom refused to defend itself in broadcast interviews. Finally, the district general manager, Mr. Roy Cull, emerged from his bunker and gave a now celebrated television interview. When asked a mildly challenging but perfectly fair question, he lost his temper, made a dismissive gesture and walked off the set hissing the memorable and inelegant expletive, "Stuff it". British Telecom then published an untrue excuse for Mr. Cull's startling walkout. The BBC described its explanation as a "distortion". That was a kind judgment.

British Telecom then called a further press conference to apologise and to change tack by trying to do what is done at Sellafield. It has now invited the public to visit the 999 centre. This pantomime is a classic lesson in how not to run a public relations operation. I urge the public to take up the invitation to visit the 999 centre as I did. If they do, they will see primitive technology in action. Operators push cable plugs into holes, leaf through a card index and scribble notes on a paper pad. There is more high-tech in

the average family games computer or in a domestic washing machine than in the Cardiff 999 operation. However, in a darkened room next to that antique-tech set-up is the high-tech digital system unused and waiting. It is not yet fully operational but it was unattended and no one was working on it although I called on a working day.

The most worrying question that will face visitors when they come away from their visit is whether the equipment is up to the demands of today, remembering the great increase in the number of telephones. They will see the four emergency lines—just four—that were involved in the terrible tragedy at Pembroke dock when two young boys died in a fire. That morning 28 callers tried to ring through on those four lines. The calls were made simultaneously within a half hour period. Very impressive witnesses claim that no call was recorded for 16 minutes. Visitors will also see that, in addition to those four lines, there is one overflow line. It is so ancient and the technology is so ineffective that anyone diverted to that overflow line, as dozens were that morning, will have an eight second delay —eight seconds of silence. Anyone dialling 999 and hearing eight seconds of silence would decide that they had a defective line. That is the technology being offered to us now. One wonders what the delay would have been in that large area covering Pembroke dock and a huge rural area if there had been another emergency that day, and others had called to report that emergency.

Action is now essential if the service is to regain public confidence and trust. British Telecom in Wales stands exposed as an organisation that is only reluctantly accountable, untruthful in its public statements, coarse and boorish in its public relations, and amateurish and incompetent in fulfilling its task. Is that an organisation that the public can trust to manage our 999 service? Is the bungling, offensive arrogance of Mr. Cull acceptable in a company that has been hailed as a flagship of privatisation? The public and Parliament need reassurance that when we call for help in the life-or-death emergencies that can crop up in our daily lives at any moment, we have a Rolls-Royce, top-class service to answer and not the cut-price, accident-prone, over-stretched 999 service offered by BT.

We need an inquiry into the deterioration of the 999 service throughout Britain, because I understand that the deterioration affects more than just South Wales. We need an end to the centralisation of the service until the digital system is operational. Nearly all the incidents that I have described would have been impossible under the digital system. I have seen it demonstrated, and I know that as soon as the call is received the caller's number appears on the screen. This would eliminate many of the hoax calls and the calls that are not serious. It would also mean that there would be a virtually fool-proof way to direct calls because as the call comes through, it is linked to the appropriate emergency services in the area, and ensuring that the call goes to the appropriate area is a simple matter of pressing one button on the display.

Sadly, BT has fallen between two stools. The system that worked reasonably when there were 11 exchanges manned by people with local knowledge was centralised before the digital system was ready and in place, and the result has been the problems that we now have. The conduct of the general manager of BT in Wales, Mr. Ray Cull, is such that if we are to restore confidence in the system BT should dispense with his services. The Government have to find out what happened to the safety standards and make sure that, through Oftel and the Minister's Department, a framework is devised to ensure that safety takes its proper role as the top priority and over profits in BT's operation.

We have here a classic example of a fine service that has been corrupted by a single-minded drive for profits. The 999 service does not make a penny profit for BT, so it has been neglected. BT's energies and its top technology are devoted to its profit-rich sidelines—home security, screening of calls or intensive use of fax machines. That is where the huge profits and the burgeoning balance sheet of BT can be improved.

Condition 6 of BT's licence says that it must provide a service capable of transmitting and receiving unrestricted two-way voice telephony services and of communicating as swiftly as is practicable with any of the emergency organisations. We should examine the history of the past nine months with that condition in mind. BT in Wales, in the view of the professionals who deal with it, and in the view of the emergency services and of many who have given evidence, is no longer providing that service as swiftly and efficiently as practicable. It is far less reliable than it was before centralisation and far less efficient than it will be when the digital system is proved and operational. In its relentless pursuit of profits, BT is putting lives at risk.

2.58 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): This is an important matter and I regret that the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), who has properly raised it, somewhat spoilt his presentation of the case by larding his speech so freely with partisan slogans. As he said, this is an important public service, designed to improve the safety of families and individuals. He does his cause no service by approaching it in a highly partisan way.

It might be helpful if I set out the background. Last year British Telecom handled 19 million 999 calls. Of those, 950 —0·005 per cent.—went astray due to operator mistakes. Except in exceptional circumstances, such as following major disasters, the level of complaints about the 999 service has been remarkably low.

In south Wales, BT's Cardiff exchange last year handled 815,000 emergency calls. Of those, only one third —fewer than 300,000—actually required connection to the emergency services. The fact is that as well as those who simply do not require the emergency services or those who simply misdial, there are large numbers of hoax calls. That is deplorable, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman shares that view. It places an enormous strain on the service and greatly increases the chances of genuine cases not being dealt with properly. I was horrified when I heard about the high numbers of hoax calls. All hon. Members should call on the public to use this important public service responsibly—as, indeed, most people do.

Of the genuine calls in south Wales, a small number —about 10 a year, in contrast with the large numbers mentioned by the hon. Gentleman—are misdirected through operator error. I am not suggesting that that is satisfactory, but nevertheless it is a small number. Indeed, the figure is little different from that experienced either historically in south Wales or nationally. The allegations

[Mr. Francis Maude]

that errors have been caused by centralisation or cost-cutting are simply nonsense. No adverse developments can be attributed to the system.

British Telecom attaches the highest priority to ensuring that in the modernisation of its network—of which we all approve—the emergency services should not be disrupted, but, indeed, should be improved. During the last financial year BT undertook to invest £2·9 billion in its network. It replaced two outdated exchanges every working day and has laid more than 500,000 km of optic fibre since 1984. A quarter of its network is already digitalised, and all will be within a few years.

In Cardiff the majority of calls are handled by a modern exchange that was recently opened by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. The equipment that will handle 999 calls is currently being tried on standard 100 operator calls. It is right and responsible that BT should test the system in that way and not extend it to 999 calls until it is entirely robust and BT is satisfied that it will improve the service, not jeopardise it. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should take issue with that responsible approach.

I find it difficult to understand why the hon. Gentleman and some of his Friends want to carry out a campaign that has done nothing but make the job of the emergency call service more difficult.

Mr. Flynn *rose*——

Mr. Maude: I shall not give way because the hon. Gentleman used up quite a lot of time and I have points that I wish to make before the debate ends.

The hon. Gentleman's campaign has increased the number of unnecessary calls from the public to the 999 service. People are phoning to find out whether the service is as bad as the hon. Gentleman has made it out to be. That has made the job of running this important service considerably more difficult. Hon. Members should support the service, not make its task more difficult. Hon. Members could take one practical step if they seek further reassurance—they should direct their concerns to Sir Bryan Carsberg, the Director General of Telecommunications. His office has the duty of monitoring and enforcing the conditions of licences issued to public telecommunications operators. I know that he is concerned to ensure that the full range of public responsibilities are met by such operators. I do not know whether he would see fit to take action in this instance, but, rather than mounting what has in some cases turned into a vicious campaign against British Telecom, the hon. Gentleman should address his complaints to Sir Bryan so that they can be properly investigated. That is his proper recourse.

I know that most hon. Members share my admiration for those who provide these vital emergency services, and I find it wholly regrettable that some people should denigrate others who work so hard to ensure the safety of the public. The whole issue has put considerable personal pressure on the operators who man the service in south Wales, and I do not believe that that is likely to enhance their performance. I assure them that Conservative Members, at any rate, support them fully, and I very much regret that they will not be able to rely on support from both sides of the House.

The hon. Gentleman should desist from his campaign, which has, in itself, done much to undermine public confidence in the service and to sap the morale of those who provide it. This campaign of denigration has done nothing but harm, and it should cease.

Mr. Flynn: That was a disgraceful reply. I am very disappointed that the Minister has not taken my remarks on board. My personal involvement in the campaign is due purely to my being a Member of Parliament for Newport. There are two Newports in Wales, and on three occasions when calls have been made from one of them the emergency services have been sent to the other, 140 miles away.

I could show the Minister a good many letters of support for what he called a campaign, but what in fact is evidence provided by the emergency service and its victims. I refused to comment in the press on the first case involving the two Newports, because I naively believed what British Telecom said—that it had been a one-off. Today we have heard the fatuous claim that there have been only 10 such cases. If the Minister reads *Hansard*, he will discover how many people he is contradicting. According to correspondence that I have received in the past week, one ambulance service found five cases of misdirection within 10 days, one involving 25 minutes' delay in attending to a women with terrible injuries.

The evidence presented by all the ambulance services in Wales, and by the other groups, is overwhelming. British Telecom has a fine service for the future, but, driven by the desire for cuts, it cut services in the areas and sacked staff before the centralised service was technologically capable of handling the new calls.

This is not just my evidence; it is the evidence of the professionals. It is wrong to try to escape from that by turning the accusation on those who were genuinely disturbed. Like many other people, I have had the terrible experience of making a 999 call when a member of my family was dying, and I know the agony involved. I know that every second feels like a minute while the ambulance does not arrive. For many people that anguish has been doubled, because their faith in the service has gone.

The Government should have responded positively today. They should have told us that the technology at the end of a 999 call is the best possible: there can be no delay. The technology of the Cardiff exchange is out of date. I have seen that, and others will see the same if they go there. Expenditure on high technology is being confined to the high-profit services; we are seeing the effects of privatisation.

This is not a partisan point. We are talking about services that are dedicated to the public good, and the 999 service is very precious to us. We want to know that the service is there and that it is the best. It has been downgraded in south Wales, and the result is——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Perhaps I am in error, but I thought that the hon. Gentleman wanted to intervene in the Minister's speech. If so, it is an overlengthy intervention.

Mr. Flynn: I understood that the Minister had finished, and I was making use of the time——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman does not have the right to address the House twice.

Mr. Flynn: I beg leave to ask permission to address the House twice, as my understanding is that the Minister has concluded his speech.

Mr. Maude: Certainly not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Leave withheld.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 10 July 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

British Rail

1. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Rail; and what matters he proposes to discuss.

6. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss the current state of rail services.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): I am meeting the chairman of British Rail tomorrow to discuss a variety of railway matters.

Mr. Bennett: When my right hon. Friend sees the chairman of British Rail tomorrow, will he point out that under this Government investment is at its highest level since the modernisation of the railways in the early 1960s and that the House will expect that if the Government are to provide the railways with large sums of public money from the taxpayers' pockets the least that the railways can do is to operate? Will he also tell the Leader of the Opposition to come off the fence and support the Government by calling for an end to the strike?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend knows from the answer to his written question on 7 June that investment in British Rail is running at about £781 million this year and it is due to rise by a further 50 per cent. in real terms. Since I became Secretary of State for Transport just over two years ago, I have approved 12 major British Rail investment schemes with a total value of £602 million. The figures that the Leader of the Opposition gave last Thursday are wholly wrong, and totally inaccurate. His claim that investment was 25 per cent. higher under the Labour Government is completely false.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will the Secretary of State explain to the chairman of British Rail that the strike is not political and that when the Chancellor of the Exchequer threatens investment in British Rail, which has come not from the Government but from the traveller, he is merely exercising his usual form of bigotry?

Mr. Channon: No, I do not agree at all. The threat to increased investment comes not from the Chancellor of the Exchequer but from the strikes. That is the point that the House should understand. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer points out the facts of life. If the railways do not work reliably, people will try not to use them and will not want to invest in them. I want to see more investment in British Rail, particularly to take advantage of the new opportunities that will be provided by the Channel tunnel in 1992. I ask Members in all parts of the House to join me in urging the parties to the strike to get together this afternoon so that the matter can be resolved.

Mr. Higgins: Will my right hon. Friend convey to the chairman of British Rail the fact that the travelling public as a whole, not merely those who travel on the railways, regard it as intolerable that strikes are taking place when there is a perfectly reasonable negotiating machinery for settling the matter without strike action? Will he therefore urge the chairman of British Rail to get on with the negotiations and in turn urge the unions to settle the dispute as it should be settled—through the normal agreed negotiating machinery?

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend. Furthermore, I understand that at lunchtime today British Rail asked the three unions to come to talks this afternoon at 3 o'clock. I am sure that I can count on the support of the whole House when I say that all of us would like those talks to take place.

Mr. Dunn: When my right hon. Friend sees the chairman of British Rail tomorrow, will he inform him that the proposals for the high-speed link to Dartford constituency are totally unacceptable to the people living there and that the only way to make the link acceptable is to place it underground?

Mr. Channon: I shall, of course, bring my hon. Friend's remarks to the chairman's attention. I think that he is already well aware of my hon. Friend's views and he will, I am sure, treat them seriously.

Mr. Simon Hughes: While the invitation by the chairman of British Rail to the unions for talks this afternoon is very welcome, will the Secretary of State make it clear to the chairman of British Rail that it takes two to negotiate? Does he accept that both his attitude and that of his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer have been extremely unhelpful, suggesting that only one side had brought about the dispute when the management of British Rail is widely regarded as having been extremely unsatisfactory for several years?

Mr. Channon: What is important now is that we should concentrate on prospects for a settlement. *[Interruption.]* I am glad to have the support of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). I should have thought that all hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, would want British Rail's invitation to the three unions to meet this afternoon to be taken up and talks to begin.

Mr. Gregory: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the present rail strike is undemocratic as only four out of 10 voted to go on strike? Will he confirm that if the strike is not over soon, rail users—passengers and freight—will move away to road and air on a long-term basis? Is he aware that people in great major cities such as York are looking forward to the denationalisation of the industry?

Mr. Channon: I know my hon. Friend's views on that long-term issue. There has been no decision yet and studies are still in progress. It will go ahead only if privatisation is

feasible and offers benefits to railway users. My hon. Friend raised another exceedingly important point, as businesses throughout the country will have to decide quite soon how they plan to invest in the light of the Channel tunnel. There is an enormous opportunity for British Rail to get a far greater share of rail freight than ever before, but that will not happen if the railways are seen to be unreliable. The strikes are doing grave long-term damage to the prospects of those employed in British Rail.

Mr. David Marshall: The Secretary of State seems to fail to appreciate the reasons for the dispute. Nothing that he has said so far goes any way towards resolving it. Will he tell the House when he intends to take positive measures to end the strike? What does he plan to do to bring it to an end?

Mr. Channon: It is not for the Government to negotiate these matters—it is for British Rail and the trade unions involved, and they have the opportunity to do so. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has not joined me in urging the unions to attend the talks this afternoon. I hope that I have the unanimous support of the House, although I am not sure that I do. I ask all hon. Members to urge that all parties involved in the dispute begin talks at once and continue until they reach a settlement.

Mr. Norris: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the most worrying features of the current dispute is the way in which the rail unions purport to represent British Rail as having hundreds of millions of pounds in profits? Does he agree that any detailed reading of British Rail's accounts shows that the railway network made an operating profit of less than £20 million this year and that it would be wholly irresponsible of British Rail to enter into negotiations for an award that it could not possibly finance in future?

Mr. Channon: I fear that my hon. Friend is right. As the House knows, there is a subsidy to British Rail of hundreds of millions of pounds, which also throws a new light on those interesting figures.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Secretary of State agree that it is not simply a matter of pay? Will he tell the House how long the machinery for national negotiation of wages has been in existence? Will he say whether he has given British Rail instructions to terminate that, and will he give instructions for British Rail to withdraw the notice of termination? Does he agree that such a notice was part of the problem and that if he did not take action to prevent it, the Government are partly responsible?

Mr. Channon: I have not given British Rail any instructions on the matter. As the hon. Gentleman points out, there are two major points of dispute between British Rail and some but not all the unions involved. One is pay and the other is the bargaining machinery. Both can and should be negotiated. Any changes to the bargaining machinery that British Rail proposes do not come into effect until November. There seems to be ample time for negotiation before entering into senseless strikes which do so much damage to the travelling public and to the long-term future of the railways.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: Can my right hon. Friend recall in his earlier meetings with the chairman of British Rail whether he was ever shown a business plan for the Channel tunnel rail link? If he has not been shown such a plan, does that not give credence to the belief that British Rail embarked upon this massive project without producing a proper business plan?

Mr. Channon: A proper business plan will have to be produced for any high-speed rail link proposal that is brought before the House if it is to have a chance of getting through the procedures of the House of Commons. If and when British Rail produces such proposals as my hon. Friend has in mind, it will have to show proper financial justification as well as cover all the other points on which it will have to satisfy the House.

Mr. Prescott: The House will welcome the Secretary of State's conversion to the need for talks, rather than describing one party to them as "cowardly" as he did at the beginning of the dispute. Has the Secretary of State read the statement made by the Railway Staff National Tribunal? Does he accept its finding that the 7 per cent. pay offer imposed by British Rail, which is one of the causes of the dispute, was inadequate and represented a cut in real wages? Does he agree with the tribunal that the exeptional productivity of railway workers over the past few years has fully funded wage increases and justifies a wage increase today? Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that if the tribunal's findings provide the basis for a settlement acceptable to the Government he will not put financial obstacles in the board's way which prevent the dispute being brought to an end?

Mr. Channon: I noticed, rather surprisingly, that the hon. Gentleman did not urge the unions to attend talks this afternoon.

Mr. Snape: Answer the question.

Mr. Channon: I shall certainly answer the question. I also noticed that the hon. Gentleman did not condemn the strikes which are causing major disruption and interference to the railways and passengers. Of course I have read the decision of the Railway Staff National Tribunal, but it is for the parties concerned to negotiate, not for the Government. The parties could be at the negotiating table within a quarter of an hour and the dispute could be settled. I am amazed that the Opposition did not join us in that request.

M3-M27 Link

2. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a statement on the completion of the M3-M27 motorway link.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): We hope to award the main contract for the Compton to Bassett section of the M3 extension shortly.

Progress on the Bar End to Compton section depends on our consideration of the inspectors' reports on the recent inquiries. We hope to make an announcement later.

Mr. Atkinson: My hon. Friend's statement will be greeted with relief and encouragement by the millions of motorists who have had to endure more than a decade of misery and delay along the present A33 link road, but they will not believe in the completion of the motorway link

until they see it. Will my hon. Friend be more precise about when he foresees the road actually being open for use by motorists?

Mr. Bottomley: The answer to the first part of my hon. Friend's question about completion is 1991. It would be beyond the abilities of my crystal ball to give an answer to the second part.

Mr. Ward: Is my hon. Friend aware that we have had five public inquiries about this stretch of road and that between 1978 and 1987 there were 217 accidents on it involving personal injury? Could not my hon. Friend go down in history as the Minister who made up his mind? The Department has procrastinated for donkey's years. No new information will be forthcoming from an inquiry, so will my hon. Friend make us his mind? I was told that the section would be opened last year, but there is still no sign of activity.

Mr. Bottomley: The excuse—and the reason—for the delay outlined in the second part of my hon. Friend's question was legal matters; if I answered the first part of my hon. Friend's question, further legal problems would probably result. The fastest way of helping is to say nothing.

Road Congestion

3. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on his proposals to relieve road congestion in the south-east.

Mr. Channon: The proposals in the White Paper, "Roads for Prosperity", together with the many major schemes already in our programme, will greatly help to relieve road congestion in the south-east.

Mr. Smith: Given the abject complacency of that response, will not the Secretary of State take note of the deepening anger among people in the south-east at how chronically worsening congestion is poisoning the environment, damaging business and driving the public slowly—in many cases, stationarily—round the bend? Does he accept that the way to tackle the congestion is through measures to halt the relentless increase in car use, and that that will be achieved only through a proper plan for transport throughout the south-east which stresses the investment needs of railways, buses, cycling and proper traffic management and achieves the right balance between car use and public transport?

Mr. Channon: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would be the last hon. Member to ask such a supplementary question, as I understand that he represents Cowley. I should have thought that people would prefer to be in work rather than out of it, including the hon. Gentleman's constituents. His suggestions would probably have deleterious effect on his constituency. I am trying to provide a decent road infrastructure in the south-east, and we are doing a great deal in Oxfordshire.

Mr. Soames: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the extensive package of new road building that he recently announced will be of great benefit to the south-east? Will he acknowledge, however, that it is on minor roads in constituencies such as mine that great difficulties are experienced? Will he do what he can to work more closely with West Sussex county council—his hon. Friend the Minister has been doing so—and view favourably any further requests for transport supplementary grant?

Mr. Channon: I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of local roads and I will certainly look with sympathy at anything that West Sussex suggests. I know from meetings with my hon. Friend and other Sussex Members that they attach great importance to this issue and I shall certainly examine it.

A140

4. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will make a final decision on the dualling of the A140 between Scole and the A45; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We shall be considering the case for some limited further additions to the roads programme when we publish a full roads report later in the year.

Mr. Lord: My hon. Friend will be aware of the great increase in the volume of traffic on this road and of its appalling accident record. He will also be aware that we have had an Adjournment debate on this. He kindly visited the road early this year to see the problems that we have. He will also know that a little while ago there was a huge public outcry when it was announced that the road north of Scole would be dualled but that the road south in Suffolk would not. I appreciate that today is not the day for my hon. Friend to make an announcement but may we hope that when announcements are made later in the year, dualling of the A140 in Suffolk will be included in the programme?

Mr. Bottomley: Without making any commitment, I can say that I have stood by the side of that road with my hon. Friend and it is dangerous. I remember that there was a crash when drivers were distracted by a television crew. The problem is that it is an old Roman road and as it is straight further improvement will not produce the usual gains. We have said that we shall review it further and perhaps make an announcement later this year.

Automatic Ticket Barriers

5. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on arrangements for automatic ticket barriers in the event of an emergency.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): The barriers are supervised constantly by station staff, who have been instructed to open them immediately if any emergency or severe congestion occurs. The ticket gates will open automatically if power supply or air pressure failures occur. Other safety features have been incorporated or are being developed.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister realise that there are substantial demonstrations by pensioners today against automatic ticket barriers, which they regard as mechanical rottweilers? Is he aware that many pensioners cannot use the gates and need to be helped to the other side of the barriers? Given that there is far less fraud on the London Underground than in any other capital city in Europe, might it not be better to do away with the gates and restore the original system, which is far safer and commands greater public confidence?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman should suspend his judgment about the safety of the gates until we have the benefit of the report that London Regional Transport has commissioned at my request. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where is it?"] I am sorry that it is not available today, but I hope that it will be available in about a week's time. The hon. Gentleman can then judge what the consultants said on that important point.

For some pensioners it is a matter of getting used to the new gates. For the disabled, for people carrying shopping and those accompanied by children, there are manually operated gates, and staff will be on hand to let out people who find it difficult to use the automatic gates.

Mr. Carrington: In reviewing the automatic gates, will my hon. Friend bear in mind that one of the big problems, and one of the major anxieties of my constituents, is the inability of London Transport to keep change machines properly supplied with change, which leads to enormous queues at ticket offices?

Mr. Portillo: I shall make a special point of ensuring that my hon. Friend's observation is conveyed to London Regional Transport. I am sure that LRT will want to put that matter right.

Ms. Ruddock: Further to the Minister's reply about safety, does he acknowledge the deep anxiety of fire fighters about the automatic ticket gates? Is he aware of the incident at St. James's Park Underground station in which fire fighters attempted to evacuate the station because of a fire but the automatic ticket gates failed to open when they pushed the alarm button and no station staff were available? Can the Minister assure us that he receives reports of such incidents, and what action is he taking?

Mr. Portillo: I must question the premise on which the hon. Lady began her question. She talked about the concern of fire fighters, but the advice of the London fire brigade has been taken several times since the gates were proposed. The hon. Lady will know from the Fennell report that the London fire brigade and the railway inspectorate were satisfied with the installation of the gates. Since then, the London fire brigade has looked at the gates again and made a series of recommendations, which are being implemented. Over and above those two levels of approval—from the railway inspectorate and the London fire brigade—there is the report from the consultants, which will be available to the hon. Lady and the House shortly.

M6

7. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work to begin on providing fourth traffic lanes on the M6.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In about three years across Thelwall viaduct and east of Preston. It is too soon to say when construction might start on sections of the 80 miles of M6 widening announced in "Roads for Prosperity".

Mr. Butler: Does my hon. Friend agree that there are sections of the M6 which even in 1986 exceeded the design flow capacity that would be associated with a four-lane motorway? Should we not go ahead as soon as possible with providing four lanes for the M6?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Hind: My hon. Friend will be aware of the heavy traffic on the M1 and M6 on Friday afternoons and Sundays as people go away for the weekend and return home? Will he ensure that when work begins to provide four lanes on the M6 consideration will be given to those periods when traffic is extremely heavy so as to minimise the chaos which occurs on our motorway network?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, Sir. It is not just chaos, but congestion. Often the solution to congestion is spreading the load, finding other modes or getting more investment. We aim to make progress with all three.

Trunk Roads

8. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of new or improved roads will be added to the trunk road network when his expanded road programme is completed.

Mr. Channon: Some 2,700 miles of new or improved roads will be added to the trunk road network when the expanded road programme is completed.

Mr. Burns: Is my hon. Friend aware that that answer will be warmly welcomed by many people throughout the country, especially in Chelmsford? Given the announcement of the new motorway from the M25 and the widening of the A12, can he reassure people that the maximum effort will be made to keep noise nuisance levels to a minimum? Will he also ensure that compensation for land taken in building works will be paid swiftly and remedial work undertaken as quickly as possible?

Mr. Channon: I think that I can give my hon. Friend both those assurances. I am grateful to him for what he says. Perhaps he will keep in touch with my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic or with me about any detailed points that may arise.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Will the Secretary of State pause to consider that his programme for a new era of toll roads will take Britain backwards to the 18th century rather than forwards to the 21st century?

Mr. Channon: I think that that point will arise specifically on a later question. If we have a few extra toll roads in addition to what is in the public sector, I think that many people will very much welcome that.

Mr. Neale: Will my right hon. Friend accept that there is no doubt among Conservative Members that he has engineered one of the largest ever increases in funding for the road sector programme? Does he accept that we have no doubt that he has created the best possible opportunity for further private investment? Does he accept that the greater the clarity that he and his Department can give as to the prospective schemes, and the greater the certainty as to time in terms of planning and construction, the more likely he is to get more private investment to come forward?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. There has been a considerable increase in the roads programme, and that is very much needed. As for clarity in the private sector, I accept what my hon. Friend says. Of course, we are still consulting on the Green Paper that we issued at the end of May——

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman said "carroty."

Mr. Channon: Perhaps, in that case, I did not hear my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) clearly enough.

Mr. Snape: He said carrots, not claret.

Mr. Channon: Mr. Jenkins is no longer with us, but I understand the point that my hon. Friend makes. We are still consulting on the Green Paper. I will bear my hon. Friend's points in mind.

Mr. Cox: As the question refers to new and improved roads, the Secretary of State will be aware of the "options", as one of his Ministers calls them, that are under discussion for London. When does the right hon. Gentleman expect those proposals to be presented to the people of London?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend and I are right to call them options. I hope to be able to make an announcement before too long to reduce the number of options available. I am aware of the concern of the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members of all parties that we should proceed as quickly as we can so that people know exactly what lies in the future.

Railway Unions

9. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the railway unions; and if he has any plans to meet them again soon to discuss Government investment in the railways.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met leaders of the Transport Salaried Staffs Association, the National Union of Railwaymen and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen on 12 July 1988 to discuss a report on the quality of service on British Rail. No meeting is arranged at present.

Mr. Adley: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Can he confirm that for five years, British Rail has had no recourse to the national loans fund? That being so, what precisely did our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer mean when he threatened to cut the level of investment? Will my hon. Friend assure the House that he and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State are using their best endeavours with the unions and management to try to settle the current industrial dispute? Can he tell the House what those best endeavours are and, as according to his answer it is now a year since he met the unions, will he, when he meets them, tell them that the railway industry would be far better served by having one union rather than three and that that might be part of any package discussed when the strike is settled?

Mr. Portillo: I hasten to point out to my hon. Friend that the reason such meetings have not occurred is not that we have been refusing to meet people who wish to meet us. On the point about my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exhequer, I think that my hon. Friend would have made the same point if he had been there. When one listened to the unions urging that there should be more investment in the railways on the very day when the railways were shut down and when they were providing such a poor advertisement for themselves in attracting new customers, it was only reasonable that my right hon. Friend should point out the extraordinary irony of that position. My hon. Friend will appreciate that whatever the position vis-a-vis the national loans fund, this nationalised industry has been heavily indebted in the past and many of its debts have had to be written off by the Government. The industry is still heavily dependent on public sector obligation grant.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the Minister think that Rab Butler —the former chief of the Secretary of State—when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, would have had the unwisdom to make those public comments? The rail unions have given the Department a table of investment comparing the amount of state money available in Germany, Belgium and France. How do Ministers explain the fact that the level of state money being given to the railways here is so much less than that in every other European country?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman glides swiftly from talking about state money to investment, as though the two were one and the same, which they are not. As the amount of subsidy in this country has fallen—that is, the money needed to make up for the losses that the railways make each year—so the amount of investment has risen by and large. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to talk about comparisons, he must compare the fact that investment in the railways today is higher than in any year of the last Labour Government and at levels rarely seen since the 1960s. Those are the relevant comparisons and that is the background against which the strikes are occurring.

Mr. Yeo: Does my hon. Friend share my concern at the total failure of Opposition Members to condemn the strike, the only certain consequence of which is great damage to the travelling public and, in the long run, to British Rail's own employees?

Mr. Portillo: I do, indeed, find it sad and extraordinary. Opposition Members have been given the opportunity today either to condemn the strike or simply to urge that the unions should come to the talks, yet they have refused to take those opportunities. The Opposition spokesman now talks about whether the Government accept the findings of the tribunal, yet I do not remember him urging the unions to go to the tribunal in the first place.

Mr. Alfred Morris: In regard to investment in the railways, will there be an announcement today, in the first place to this House, about the projected rail link to Manchester airport which, as the Minister will know, is of major importance to the north-west of England as a whole?

Mr. Portillo: Yes, it is intended that there should be an announcement on that subject. If question No. 12 is reached, there will be some news.

Mr. Madel: Can my hon. Friend confirm that if the railway unions wish to negotiate a new system of arbitration in the railway industry, he would expect British Rail management to respond positively, but that once a new system of arbitration came in he would also expect both unions and management to abide by its recommendations?

Mr. Portillo: There is an existing system of negotiating machinery and arbitration. One of the unions has been willing to go to arbitration—so far, the other two have not.

The question now is whether those other two unions will discuss the decision made by the arbitrator in the case of the TSSA. The railway management is clearly working with the negotiating machinery that is in place today. If decisions are taken to change that negotiating machinery, that will be a question for further consideration. However, that does not seem relevant to the point that arbitration machinery is in place today and that one union has used it. The railway management is now offering to talk to all the unions on the basis of that decision.

Mr. Prescott: We are pleased to hear that the Minister now believes that the Chancellor's statement was ironic, if not untruthful. That is a further example of the Government being economic with the truth, as they are with the investment figures, which fly in contradiction with the evidence that they gave to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Will the Minister give examples of the unions refusing to meet the Secretary of State? Will he also make it absolutely clear that I have spent much time and effort going around all the parties involved, asking them to come to the table and to negotiate and discuss these issues? Even today, does he not accept that the tribunal cannot deal with the bargaining issue which is equally important and determined by ballots, under the rules?

Mr. Portillo: Of course, the tribunal cannot deal with that, but we are beyond that stage. The management is saying that it is willing to talk about the arbitrator's decision on pay. Indeed, the management has always been willing to talk about the bargaining machinery. I do not understand how the point arises. We are now beyond the stage of the tribunal in the case of the TSSA.

Referring to the hon. Gentleman's offer to mediate, the three qualities that I would look for in a mediator are fairmindedness, charm and tact—so I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is not on my short list.

Trunk Roads (Financing)

11. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many trunk roads have been financed wholly or largely by the private sector since 1986; and how many cost-sharing agreements for trunk road schemes are under consideration.

Mr. Channon: In addition to the Dartford bridge, there have been 58 schemes in the past three years. A further 50 agreements are being considered.

Mr. Carrington: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that that is an excellent way of increasing investment in the road infrastructure and obtaining value for money at the same time? Does he also agree that the introduction of tolls on roads would have the further benefit of ensuring that roads do not get clogged up with non-essential traffic and that commercial transport will then be able to get through properly?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and am sure that as the new developments come forward—with some possibly being financed by tolls—they will provide extra opportunities for roads and will be widely welcomed throughout the country.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Secretary of State aware that the many road proposals in the east London assessment study are all bitterly opposed by the local communities? Will he confirm whether there have been discussions with any private road entrepreneurs to build private roads in the area covered by the east London assessment study?

Mr. Channon: I know of no such proposals.

Transport (North-west)

12. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new measures he is proposing to improve road, rail and air transport links in north-west England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I can today announce my approval for a scheme to link Manchester airport to the rail network at a cost of just under £25 million. The rail link should be ready by 1993 when the second terminal is due to open. About £1 billion of the £7 billion increase in trunk roads spending announced on 18 May is for the north-west. There are proposals to widen existing motorways, construct a new motorway west and north of Manchester, and for new bypasses.

Mr. Thurnham: In welcoming that good news from my right hon. Friend, may I urge him to press ahead with that work as quickly as possible and to ensure as few delays as possible in view of the importance of the air-rail link to the continuing success of the popular airport at Manchester?

Mr. Channon: I am extremely anxious that Manchester airport should have every opportunity to expand still further. I shall certainly do my best to ensure that the rail link is in operation when the second terminal is opened. I hope that that will provide general satisfaction in the north-west.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: I welcome that news, but will the Minister say something about the further development of the motorway linking Denton and Oldham, and passing through Ashton-under-Lyne?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his remarks about the rail link to the airport. As he knows, four major motorway contracts have recently been completed. We are also engaged in the completion of the Manchester ring gantries, the completion of the M63 widening south of Barton bridge and the Derby road improvement in Bootle. I shall bear in mind what the right hon. Gentleman said, and if he has a detailed point to raise, perhaps I had better write to him about it.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I thank my right hon. Friend on behalf of my constituents who will no longer have to go to London and waste time and money spending the night there when they could perfectly well fly from Manchester. When considering these megaschemes, will my right hon. Friend also remember the village of St. Michael's on Wyre which urgently needs a bypass if the horrendous danger of the humpback bridge in St. Michael's is to be avoided?

Mr. Channon: I shall personally look into the problems of the village of St. Michael's at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Snape: Let me assure the Secretary of State that the Opposition welcome his belated announcement about the rail link to Manchester airport. Can he confirm that the £25 million cost of the project that he has so graciously

authorised falls neither on the budget of his Department nor on that of the Chancellor of the Exchequer? Does he agree that future road, rail and air transport links in north-west England should be evaluated on the same basis for each mode of transport?

Mr. Channon: On the whole, they are evaluated on a very similar basis. *[Interruption.]* There is a difference between air, rail and road. I have been trying for some time to get that into the hon. Gentleman's head, but so far I have failed. The different modes of transport are evaluated on a very similar basis. The proof of the pudding is in the eating: we are achieving massive road and rail investment and, I hope, massive air investment, in the north-west. All that is to the general good and is much to be welcomed.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Intestate Deaths

60. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total of funds administered by the Duchy of those who have died intestate in the county palatine.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Tony Newton): The affairs of those dying intestate in the county palatine of Lancaster are administered by the Solicitor for the Affairs of the Duchy of Lancaster. He is the person appointed for this purpose under the Administration of Estates Act 1925.

In the year to 29 September 1988 the solicitor administered a total of over 270 such cases. The gross total of funds involved after payment of debts but before ex-gratia payments or administrative expenses were made was £1,129,298.

Mr. Pike: Will the Chancellor of the Duchy do everything in his power to ensure that the estates are dealt with as speedily as possible? Will he also ensure that any residue is used to help create jobs and to encourage development in the county palatine?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly do everything that I can to make the administration of the estates as speedy as possible. I think that I referred to the question of a benevolent fund. I should be rather reluctant to tie that to the creation of jobs—many such funds are for charitable purposes—although naturally it is to be hoped that employment opportunities will be created as a result.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Ecclesiastical Buildings

61. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, when the Church Commissioners last met the leaders of the Methodist Church to discuss the use of ecclesiastical buildings.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): The main forum for inter-denominational discussion of matters concerning Church property is the Church main committee which meets regularly under the chairmanship of the Bishop of London. Its last meeting was on 13 March and it meets again on 17 July.

Mr. Marshall: When my right hon. Friend talks to the Church Commissioners, will he tell them to emphasise, when they next meet the leaders of the Methodist Church, that many people in the House and elsewhere are appalled at the misuse of his position by the president of the Methodist Conference, who prefers political propaganda to religious faith?

Mr. Alison: As my hon. Friend has done, no doubt, I have read Dr. John Vincent's inaugural address to the Methodist conference carefully. In many respects, it is an inspiring and edifying speech, but the comments on public policy contain a substantial number of inaccuracies and suggest a good deal of misapprehension. In respect of those rather negative aspects of the speech, I propose to write to him in a personal capacity to try to put the record straight.

Mr. Frank Field: Has the right hon. Gentleman seen a copy of the Archbishop's sermon yesterday on toleration? If so, would he care to give a copy to his hon. Friend the Member of Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall)? Will he draw the attention of the House to the fact that while some of us may disagree with what the president of the Methodist conference says or does not say, it is a sign of our democracy that he can say it?

Mr. Alison: I heard the Archbishop of Canterbury's admirable sermon in York Minster yesterday. The sermon was directed at fundamentalists. Dr. Vincent's speech was not in any sense—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that Dr. Vincent should address himself to matters spiritual and ecclesiastical and not make crass comments of a politically based nature?

Mr. Alison: I have much sympathy with what my hon. Friend says. If Church leaders, in the context of Church occasions, make speeches on public policy, it is important that those speeches are accurate and factual. Given those ingredients, such speeches are to be welcomed.

Mr. Heffer: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the reaction of some of his colleagues in the House this afternoon would have been precisely the same as that to Christ our Lord when he was alive?

Mr. Alison: Dr. Vincent's speech, as I have already suggested, contained a great deal of material that was accurate, edifying and inspiring. However, it also contained a substantial number of inaccuracies. I believe that there is no precedent for, or merit in, making speeches about public matters which contain substantial inaccuracies.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Audits

62. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what information he has on the total cost of auditing the following accounts: *(a)* Palestine Currency Fund, *(b)* Paris Commission, *(c)* Doris Duke Gift Fund, *(d)* Anglo-German Foundation for Study of Industrial Society, *(e)* Sir Henry Dale Lecture Fund, *(f)* Winchester College, University and College Estate, *(g)* Tithe Act 1936, *(h)* Home Grown Sugar Beet Research and Education Fund, *(i)* Gas Levy *(j)* Distribution of

Energy Property, *(k)* Water Act 1973, *(l)* Iron and Steel Act 1982, *(m)* Antient Domain of the Crown, Jersey; what review of the need for public audit of these accounts has taken place; and when.

Sir Peter Hordern (Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission): The Comptroller and Auditor General has informed me that the total cost of auditing the 13 accounts listed in my hon. Friend's question was £42,000 in 1988-89. Eight of those audits flow from statutory duties placed on the Comptroller and Auditor General. The remainder are audits that he undertakes by agreement with the Treasury. In most cases this is because the funds concerned are within the control of a Government Department of which he is already auditor; the audit of the Paris Commission is undertaken at the request of the governing body of that international organisation and the full cost is recovered.

Mr. Field: Given my hon. Friend's knowledge of public service pensions and his well-known zeal for expunging inflation from the economy, precisely how do the costs of the audit fees for those accounts take into account the future liability of the index-proofed, inflation-proof pension of the National Audit Office staff who undertake those audits? Does my hon. Friend agree that no such future taxation liability arises under a private audit fee carried out by a private practice? What justification, therefore, is there for continuing those audits in the public sector?

Sir Peter Hordern: My hon. Friend's question, alas, does not arise from the original question on the Order Paper. However, if he cares to table a question specifically on the subject that he has just raised, I shall do my best to answer it.

TRANSPORT

"Roads for Prosperity"

14. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received regarding his White Paper "Roads for Prosperity".

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): The numerous representations that I have received recently about "Roads for Prosperity" have mostly expressed strong support.

Mr. Yeo: I thank my right hon. Friend for his helpful answer. Has my right hon. Friend seen a copy of "Regional Trends" published last week which shows that East Anglia is by far the fastest growing region in the country by almost any measure that my right hon. Friend can think of, including the number of Conservative Members of Parliament? In the light of that, will he bring forward at the earliest possible date those proposals in his White Paper which will be of great benefit to improving the road system in East Anglia?

Mr. Channon: Yes, Sir. I can give my hon. Friend that complete assurance. If my hon. Friend studies the proposals for East Anglia, he will see that £1,800 million of new schemes are added to the £700 million handled at the moment. That shows our awareness of the importance of the road network to the economic growth of East Anglia.

Mr. Foulkes: Is not the quickest and cheapest method of reducing congestion in the south-east of England to encourage firms in the south that have difficulty recruiting trained labour to move up to the north and to Scotland where there is an abundance of such labour?

Mr. Channon: I certainly would not disagree with that.

British Rail (Privatisation)

15. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on Her Majesty's Government policy on the privatisation of British Rail; and if he will introduce legislation to permit the privatisation of particular services within the passenger network.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): No decisions have yet been taken on the privatisation of British Rail. I have no plans to bring forward legislation for the privatisation of particular services in advance of those decisions.

Mr. Taylor: Is my hon. Friend the Minister aware that on the Fenchurch street line to Southend, the reliability of service is so unfortunate that on occasions, passengers find it difficult to establish whether there is a labour dispute, a strike, a work to rule or nothing in progress? Would not Southend be an ideal place to try an experiment with privatisation, bearing in mind that we have two lines from Southend to London, one which could be run by a private company and the other by British Rail? Will he bear in mind the successful privatisation of the cleansing department in Southend? Staff are paid much higher wages and provide a better service at a lower cost to the rate payers?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend will understand that I am peculiarly well-informed about services to Southend. I have a lot of sympathy with him. This matter has been looked at several times in the past. The present position is that the Government wish to examine the case for privatising all parts of British Rail. My hon. Friend will probably agree that that would be a better outcome. Until we take decisions on whether and how to do that, I do not think that it would be right to divert our efforts into looking at the proposals on a line-by-line basis.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Short Money

63. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what was the percentage increase in the amount of Short money provided for the running of the official Opposition in the House of Commons in 1988-89 and 1989-90.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The resolution of the House of 21 June 1988 provides for a maximum payment to the official Opposition of £839,709·90 in each calendar year, compared with a maximum of £493,947 under the previous resolution. This represents an increase of 70 per cent. However, because of the change in the basis of calculation of Short money, this comparison is of somewhat limited value. The actual amounts paid during any financial year reflect the irregularity of the submission

of claims. In the financial year 1988-89 the amount of financial assistance paid to the official Opposition including arrears was £1,035,649. It is not possible to compare the actual amount paid to the official Opposition in 1989-90 against the actual amount paid in 1988-89, since payments for 1989-90 are still continuing.

Mr. Bennett: When my right hon. Friend considers submissions for further Short moneys for the Opposition, will he consider the report that was published by the parliamentary Labour party review committee 10 days ago on the state of the Labour party? It reveals that many Labour Members practise the cult of the individual, are rowdy and ill-disciplined and have poor morale, and that it would help if they improved their parliamentary performance. Does he agree that the Labour party needs not more money but better leadership?

Mr. Wakeham: I have to say that my hon. Friend misunderstands the purpose of Short money. It is not to put right the shortcomings of the Labour party, which will require more than money.

Mr. Winnick: Leaving aside the snide and sarcastic comment that we have just heard, does the Leader of the House agree that it would be wise for all Conservative Members carefully to bear in mind Short money for the official Opposition, considering that they will be filling our places aft r the next general election?

Mr. Wakeham: If it comes to snide remarks, the whole House knows where to look for experience. The House will continue to provide Short money for the official Opposition for many years to come, and the hon. Gentleman will be a recipient of some of it.

House of Commons (Access)

64. **Mr Tony Banks:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has received any representations regarding access to the House of Commons by members of the public.

Mr. Wakeham: Yes, Sir. A number of hon. Members, including the hon. Gentleman himself, have raised the issue of access for mass lobbies and for visitors to the Line of Route in correspondence with me, during business questions, and in early-day motions.

Mr. Banks: It is about time that we started doing something to make members of the public more welcome in their Houses of Parliament. Frankly, hon. Members seem to do all that they can to put them off coming here. Why can we not now have a proper inquiry into ways that we can improve access and facilities for members of the public, so that they can come here without having to have a Member of Parliament take them to get a cup of tea and a sandwich? It is about time that we made people welcome in this place. They pay for it.

Mr. Wakeham: These matters are looked at from time to time, but it is appropriate that I should repeat once again that the use of Westminster Hall is a matter for those authorities in whom responsibility for it is vested. The principles that govern its use require the Hall to be used only for parliamentary functions, royal occasions, a ceremony in honour of a head of state or an event with a clear historical connection with Parliament. As my predecessor said on one occasion, one of the attractions of Westminster Hall is how little it is used.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: As my right hon. Friend acknowledged, concern has been expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House for some considerable time because although members of the public wait outside the Norman Porch entrance of the other place, often for many hours in the rain, no canopy has been erected for them, although there are often parties of schoolchildren. It is inexcusable that there has been such a terrific delay in erecting such a canopy. If it happened outside the precincts of the Palace, we should all be complaining loudly. Can something be done about this?

Mr. Wakeham: As I have said before, these matters are the subject of inquiry, and there are discussions going on with the other place. The Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee has made a number of proposals, which are being investigated. It is hoped that it will be possible to respond positively in time for some improvement to be made before the onset of winter.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I welcome the current investigations. Will the Leader of the House consider two things? The first is monitoring, over a short period, the time that it takes on different days for lobbies to get through the security system and into the place where they are meeting, whether that is the Grand Committee Room or the Central Lobby. Secondly, on the days when there are lobbies, could they be given the exclusive use of one of the channels of security clearance so that people on other business can have a clear passage through the other?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall refer those suggestions to the Committee responsible and which looks at these matters from time to time. It will take careful note of the hon. Gentleman's suggestions.

European Community Debates

65. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hours have been spent debating European Community matters since June 1987.

Mr. Wakeham: Some 163 hours, including 14 hours in Standing Committee and 11 hours on ministerial statements. This total excludes time spent on European Community matters during Question Time and during the business statement, for which timing could be calculated only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Marshall: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Is he convinced that the effectiveness of scrutiny is proportional to the time spent on it?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not convinced of that. In fact, I am convinced of rather the opposite—I do not believe that the time is as well spent as it should be. That is why I am pleased that the Select Committee on Procedure is looking at these matters, and that is why I have had a number of helpful discussions with the Select Committee on European Legislation. I hope that all this will enable us to bring before the House proposals to deal with these matters in a rather more satisfactory manner.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In the light of the very strong support given by the British people during the recent

European elections, is it not time for this Parliament to transform its attitude towards the rights of Members of the European Parliament when they visit Westminster? We may have discussed these matters on previous occasions, before that famous vote was cast, but is it not time that we changed our attitudes and considered bringing Members of the European Parliament into our proceedings—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—not giving them a vote, but allowing them the right to attend our Committees, where on occasion they might have the right to speak?

Mr. Wakeham: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that his party receiving 14·5 per cent. of the total vote of the electorate is a strong performance, I should be interested to know what he thinks is a weak performance. As to access by Members of the European Parliament to the Palace of Westminster, the hon. Gentleman will remember that one of my hon. Friends moved an amendment during a debate that we had recently to make a modest improvement in that situation. I accepted the amendment, and the House passed it, but against strong opposition from Labour Members. They showed clearly that they would oppose any further suggestion of increased rights. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman raises the matter at a parliamentary Labour party meeting to see how he gets on there.

Sir Dudley Smith: Given that media coverage of the European Parliament is most inadequate, surely it is vital that debates on important Community matters in this House should be in prime time rather than in the far reaches of the night, which happens so often nowadays.

Mr. Wakeham: The question of what we do in prime time is subject to a lot of competition. There is no more prime time in the day that I can find and something must disappear if we are to find more prime time for European matters. I believe that it is possible for the existing time to be better used. That is what I am seeking to achieve, to, I hope, the general satisfaction of everyone in the House.

Broadcasting

66. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what steps he will take to make provision for a sound or television link from the Chamber to the offices of those Members and Officers who request it.

Mr. Wakeham: There are no plans to go beyond the recommendations contained in the report on televising proceedings of the House which advocated the installation of a monitor screen in each of the Division Lobbies.

Mr. Allen: You, Mr. Speaker, quite rightly, have the right to have a sound feed to your Rooms, as do your Deputies, IRN, the BBC and the press lobby. Could those rights be extended to Members of this House?

Mr. Wakeham: Obviously they could be, but I must tell the hon. Gentleman that such a decision would be contentious. The unanimous opinion of the Select Committee on televising proceedings of the House was that any such system would tend to encourage Members away from the Chamber, would be intrusive to neighbouring Members and costly to install. I am afraid that that is why the hon. Gentleman received a negative reply when he wrote to me about this matter. My reply represented the unanimous view of the Committee.

Beer (MMC Report)

3.31 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Anthony Newton): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to announce the Government's response to the report from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the supply of beer. This was a comprehensive report. It recommended far-reaching changes in the brewing sector. Passionate views for and against its recommendations have been expressed forcefully since it was published on 21 March. We have listened carefully to views from all quarters—large and small brewers, the tenants, and most importantly, the consumers. But before we announce our decisions I should like to restate the Government's position in relation to this and all other MMC reports.

The essence of the Government's view is that competition is good for industry and commerce and, above all, for consumers. It encourages enterprise, greater productivity, greater diversity and lower prices. In general, the operation of the market delivers the benefits of competition to the consumer. But sometimes the Government have to step in—in mergers, restrictive and anti-competitive practices, and monopolies. And the ultimate sanction which the Government hold—and exercise when necessary—is to order divestment. Without this sanction our policies to ensure that competition is kept free would be without force and effect.

Certain preliminary conclusions were announced by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 8 June; and my right hon. and noble Friend made a further statement of the Government's position during a debate in another place on 14 June. We made it clear that certain measures would apply to the national brewers but not to regional and local brewers.

I now turn to the specific decisions we have reached on matters covered in the MMC's recommendations. We have taken particular note of recent further evidence of the need for more competition in the supply of soft drinks and low-alcohol beers to pubs. We have decided therefore that tenants of the national brewers should be free to buy those and certain other products from any source, free of ties. Products thus freed from the tie will include non-alcoholic and low-alcohol beers, soft drinks, ciders, wines and spirits. These measures should significantly enhance competition in the supply of those products.

All brewers will be required to supply beer to the wholesale trade at prices no more than those in a published list. The MMC showed that some wholesalers had been prevented from operating in the market because brewers had refused them supplies. These measures, and others I shall shortly come to, should stimulate a more open and competitive wholesale market in beer and other drinks.

We agree with the MMC's conclusion that licensed tenants must be given greater security of tenure in the new circumstances. I confirm that amendments to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 will be brought forward as soon as parliamentary time permits to give licensed tenants the same protection as other business tenants. We are conscious that many tenants have found themselves in an uncertain position since the MMC report was published. In some cases they have already been served with notice to quit. It is regrettable that some brewers have seen fit to take this action before firm decisions have been announced.

We envisage that subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary legislation, all tenancies which have three or more years to run from today's date will fall within the scope of the Act. In the case of tenancies without a definite term, they will fall within the scope of the Act with effect from three years from today, or from the first rent review after the legislation takes effect, whichever first occurs.

The MMC made a number of recommendations aimed at giving tenants further protection beyond that provided by the Landlord and Tenant Act. We have considered this carefully, and have taken particular note of the representations made by the National Licensed Victuallers Association that the power the brewer landlord has over the tenant is such as to justify a special level of tenant's protection. We have, however, decided that it would not be right to go further than affording licensed tenants the same protection as all other business tenancies.

We hope that landlords who have issued notices to quit to their tenants as a consequence of the MMC report will now withdraw such notices. We have announced what we believe are appropriate transitional arrangements. We do not wish to see the position of tenants unduly jeopardised in the period before any amendments take effect. If necessary, my right hon. and noble Friend will make an interim order under the Fair Trading Act 1973, as amended by the current Companies Bill, to safeguard their position.

The MMC recommended the prohibition of all new loan ties. The effect of loan ties is, however, very different from that of ties resulting from ownership, which are permanent ties to one brewer's products. Loan ties can and do change from brewer to brewer frequently. It is clear that in the right circumstances they can be pro-competitive. We have also been persuaded that these loans can be an invaluable source of finance for new public houses and particularly for clubs.

We have therefore decided not to prohibit them, but instead to require that they conform to certain conditions to ensure that they are not used anti-competitively. All loan ties must be capable of termination at no more than three months' notice without penalty and, in the case of loans from the national brewers, must be confined to beer.

We have already made it clear that the requirement recommended by the MMC that tenants should be allowed to offer a guest beer should apply only to the national brewers. We have also made it plain that the guest beer will be a cask-conditioned beer, other than stout. The issues to be resolved are who should be permitted to supply the guest beer and whether the requirement should apply to all exclusive ties entered into by national brewers, whether through ownership or loans.

We have decided that the right to take a guest beer should indeed apply to all exclusive ties entered into by national brewers. As to who should be able to supply to the houses of the national brewers, one view is that any brewer, other than the one responsible for the tie, should be able to supply the guest beer. On the other hand, the Brewers Society has suggested that only brewers with an annual output of less than 200,000 barrels may supply. That would exclude any other than small, local brewers. We would welcome further views on this point during the statutory consultation period.

I now turn to measures to address the central question of the size of the tied estate of the national brewers. The MMC recommended that no brewer should be allowed to own more than 2,000 on-licences. We have always made it

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clear that we were prepared to consider alternatives provided that they dealt with the public interest issues clearly identified by the MMC.

The national brewers made it clear that nothing which fundamentally affected the strength of the tied house system would be acceptable to them. But this is the central detriment identified by the MMC. Furthermore, it is clear that greater freedom to purchase products outside obligations imposed by the brewers would be widely welcomed both by publicans and by their customers.

We have decided that all brewers who own more than 2,000 on-licensed premises will be required to release from ties one half of premises above this threshold. They must be leased free of ties to the company's products. As these premises will now become free houses, the owning brewer will be permitted to make the new form of tied loans should the new tenants require them.

At present there are about 15,000 free houses. On the basis of the data in the MMC report, these measures will add an additional 11,030 free houses. These proposals should enable a major freeing of the market without the compulsory divestment originally recommended by the MMC. The central problem identified by the MMC was that the tied house system restricts choice and competition. The MMC identified a number of ways in which the operation of the licensing system itself has this effect.

The licensing system exists to control the supply of alcoholic drinks and to ensure that such drinks are sold only by fit and proper persons. However, in practice, licensing justices take account of a wide range of factors in deciding whether to grant a licence to an applicant, including whether in their view there is a demonstrable need for a new licensed premises.

The MMC took the licensing system as given. However, in view of the consequences for competition, we believe that we should consider this matter further, even though the MMC made no recommendation to that effect.

It is no part of Government policy to seek to increase the number of licensed premises. But, equally, a licensing system devised for one purpose should not be used for another purpose, namely, to fortify a local monopoly. My right hon. and noble Friend, together with my right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and the Lord President, have agreed to look into this point further.

The main measures we have announced will take some time to put into effect. We propose that a period of two years should be allowed for those measures which involve modifying tenancy agreements or separating a business into a tied and free estate. At the end of one further year we propose that the effect of these measures should be reviewed by the Director General of Fair Trading. They involve significant structural changes to the market, and it will be important to review whether they have had the desired pro-competitive effects.

Throughout our consideration of the MMC report we have been in close touch with the European Commission, which is conducting a review of competition in the brewing sector throughout the Community. The measures that we intend to take are compatible with the terms of the existing block exemption from article 85 of the treaty of Rome.

The Commission's own examination is also looking closely at the effects on competition of vertical tying and we look forward with interest to the conclusions of the Commission's study. When the position in the United Kingdom is reviewed at the end of three years we shall take fully into account the results of the EC review and any consequent change to the EC block exemption regulation.

Drafts of orders to give effect to the measures that we have announced today will be published as soon as possible. Parties whose interests are affected by such orders will have at least six weeks after they have been published in which to make representations before the orders are placed before Parliament.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): Does the Chancellor recall the enthusiastic welcome given by the Secretary of State to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report, his readiness to grapple with the monopoly identified by the commission and his proclaimed keenness to protect the consumer? What has happened in the meantime to explain the embarrassing shift from initial welcome to the craven and complete capitulation which he has announced today? Could it conceivably be something to do with the immense lobbying power of the big brewers and the fact that they are major bankrollers of the Tory party?

Is this not a blatant example of a Government being bought and sold by its major commercial backers, a phenomenon which should be regarded as wholly unacceptable to all who are committed to good government? What price now the Government's competition policy and the authority of the MMC? Does not this climb-down completely undermine the role of the MMC? What weight can now be given to the important reports which are still expected on credit cards and on petrol retailing?

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that allowing the big brewers to retain their ownership and their continuing power to loan-tie the so-called free houses gives them all the power they need, irrespective of any formal tie, to compel tenants to accept their products? Is this not therefore a complete failure to address what, in the Chancellor's own phrase, is the central detriment identified by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

On other issues, we welcome the extension of the Landlord and Tenant Act to tenants, but what protection is to be offered to tenants who will come under immense pressure from owners to contract out of the Act? Does he not accept that without that safeguard the so-called protection is largely illusory? Is this not an extreme disappointment to the smallest breweries? For example, what has happened to the sliding scale for duty on which they placed such hopes to improve their access to the market? Is it not the truth that after so much posturing the Secretary of State has shown, as many of us foresaw, that he simply does not have the bottle to take on the big brewers? Many public houses carry the name "The King's Head". After this climb-down we can expect many public houses to be renamed "Lord Young's Scalp".

Mr. Newton: I can only assume that the hon. Gentleman scripted his remarks before he had a chance to study the statement. The notion that the proposals that I have put before the House represent anything other than a substantial change in the structure of the industry to produce a much more competitive framework in respect of the national brewers is far fetched. The hon. Gentleman might recall that the comments that were made following the publication of this report contained not merely objections by some brewers, but vigorous objections by the

TUC. Indeed, there was a letter from the hon. Gentleman himself on 29 March pointing to what in his view were the real dangers in the MMC proposals on tied houses and calling for somewhat different steps to be taken. The Government have addressed the defects in the industry that were shown by the report and in a way that will avoid the dangers to which the hon. Gentleman himself drew attention.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Will my right hon. Friend understand that his announcement is a huge improvement on the unfortunate proposal that was made originally? Will he clarify what he meant when he talked about half the pubs owned by the big brewers having to be free houses? Can he say whether his new rules will prevent brewers from continuing to increase the size of their estates? Will they still be allowed to buy and build extra pubs provided that 50 per cent. of those over 2,000 remain free houses?

Mr. Newton: Yes, that is the position. Our proposal is that half the pubs that they own over the threshold of 2,000 should be dealt with on an arm's-length basis. It would follow, of course, that if they increased their ownership of pubs they would also have to increase the number operated on an arm's-length basis.

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): Is the Chancellor of the Duchy aware that the Government's refusal to grant full and immediate protection, including an enforceable code of practice, to all tenant licensees will be greeted with dismay throughout the country? Does he not appreciate that in many respects the licensed trade is different from other businesses, not least because the pub is the tenant's home as well as his business? Why can he not accept that there is a need for proper protection for public house tenants? Does he realise that allowing contracting out will mean that the brewery companies, if they wish, can simply refuse to grant a tenancy to anyone who does not agree in advance to contract out of the Landlord and Tenant Act? Does he not appreciate that security for the licensee is very much in the interests of the customers as well as the tenant, because customers do not want to see their licensee subject to the danger of being thrown on to the street?

Mr. Newton: We considered carefully the difficult balance that had to be struck and, as I said in my statement, we concluded that it would be right to stick to extending to this particular class of business the same provisions as apply to others. We had in mind the fact that, if tenancy arrangements are made so unattractive to brewers that they do not want to go in for them, that will hardly be in anyone's interests.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): May I first declare an interest, not as one of the fat cats referred to by the Leader of the Opposition but as a simple tenant of a major brewer who would have benefited considerably from the initial Monopolies and Mergers Commission recommendations? If the Secretary of State's intention—by his initial, knee-jerk reaction that he was mindful to accept the recommendations—was to provoke the maximum constructive debate about the recommendations, then he has succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. Instead of scoring what might have been a monumental own goal, the Government have come up with a winner.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, not least for the constructive part that he has played in the discussions.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Surely the logic of the pro-competitive stance by the Department of Trade and Industry, with the divestment requirement above 2,000 on-site licences, would have been to make divestment above that limit absolute instead of the 50 per cent. half/way house that the DTI has gone for on this occasion.

The Minister referred to the further consultations that will take place on the question of guest beers. What will be the nature of those consultations? Will they be led by the DTI or will it play another passive role, waiting for the industry to comment?

Mr. Newton: On the hon. Gentleman's latter point, I expressed our views with genuine and complete openness in my statement. We shall need to lay draft orders covering consultations in the fairly near future. We shall then further consider precisely what arrangements should be made concerning where the guest beer should come from.

On the first point about divestment, I hope that it is clear to the hon. Gentleman and to the House that our proposal—that the national brewers should have to put at arm's length 50 per cent. of the on-licences that they own over 2,000—means that if they were to sell a number of pubs they would have to put yet another number at arm's length in order to fulfil the requirements.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on what I regard as a pragmatic and sensible programme for progress in the beer industry. Does he think that his proposals will protect the industry from foreign acquisition, particularly by the European Community?

Mr. Newton: The effect of the proposals, which increase the competitiveness and the service that the industry offers to the consumer, will be generally beneficial to the industry. I do not think that I can speculate beyond that.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): In these days, which mark the decline in the fortunes of the Tory party, would it not be appropriate, in the name of democracy, for the brewers to conduct a ballot within the pubs as to whether they wish to continue to subsidise the Tory party?

Mr. Newton: I am quite content to leave it to the brewers to decide what surveys to conduct. The Government have paid more attention to surveys conducted by others, including the Consumers Association, that have shown strong support for the proposals that I have put before the House this afternoon.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): Does my right hon. Friend accept that most of us on this side of the House are concerned primarily about protecting the legitimate interests of the large and small brewers and the jobs in many local breweries, representing national and regional breweries, and about protecting the very delicate structure of public houses to which the British people are so greatly attached? Does he accept that the primary public interest appears to be to keep the maximum number of public houses?

As for the proposal regarding the size of the tied estate, does my right hon. Friend accept that there is still some danger that the freeing of over 50 per cent. in some areas

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could jeopardise the variety of beer that is available from certain local breweries and the existence of many pubs that are only just viable? If my right hon. Friend sees evidence of closures as a result of the proposals, what steps can he now take to ensure that those pubs, particularly village pubs, are kept viable?

Mr. Newton: It is very unlikely that the proposals I have put forward this afternoon will have the effect that my hon. Friend suggests, especially when taking account of the guest beer proposals which are calculated and reckoned by the regional and small local brewers to have the effect of enlarging the opportunities for distinctive local and regional beers.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): As there is no evidence of a monopoly or of collusive price fixing by the six large brewers, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the MMC report was extraordinarily ideological? What are the Minister's expectations for a reduction of prices of beer—which, after all, is the major consumer test of what is the right policy—which would have followed the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's recommendations, had they been carried out, or the modified proposals which the right hon. Gentleman is putting forward?

Mr. Newton: On the second half of the right hon. Gentleman's question, I would expect the increase in competition to have its normal effect, which is to keep the downward pressure on prices greater than it otherwise would be.

On the first part of the right hon. Gentleman's question, I must confess that I am in some difficulty in deciding who is speaking for the Opposition in this matter. The view expressed by the right hon. Gentleman is not only at variance with the report's findings but clearly is at variance with the views of those on his own Front Bench.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): As the new tenancies for the holding companies with more than 2,000 houses are to be run under the Landlord and Tenant Act, which applies to commercial tenants, what will happen to those tenants when the owners rightly decide that they must operate a commercial rent? Is that not likely to lead to the closure of the most marginal pubs, notably those in the most rural areas?

Mr. Newton: I very much doubt it. The Brewers Society's evidence to the MMC suggested that rentals of tied properties were about 20 to 30 per cent. below the full market rental. However, those tenants pay much more than they otherwise would for their beer. Our reckoning is that the two factors will roughly balance out.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): To some extent, I share the view of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore).

The Chancellor of the Duchy said that

"tenants of the national brewers should be free to buy these and certain other products from any source, free of ties."

What sources and what products was he referring to, and who controls the key question of distribution?

The Minister continued:

"As these premises will now become free houses the owning brewer will be permitted to make the new form of tied loans should the new tenants require them."

The issue of tied loans is crucial to many individuals. Precisely what form of tied loans does the Minister have in mind?

Finally, the Minister said:

"We have . . . decided that it would not be right to go further than affording licensed tenants the same protection as all other business tenancies."

Why has he taken that decision?

Mr. Newton: I answered the hon. Gentleman's third question in response to an earlier question when I said that it was in no one's interest to make pub tenancies so unattractive that the brewers would turn away from them altogether.

On the issue of detriment and whether there is what the commission called a complex monopoly, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the substantial list of detriments which are set out in the MMC report. I have it in front of me, but I shall not attempt to read it to the House. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that there is not a complex monopoly, we must simply agree to differ.

On the hon. Gentleman's question about the tied loans, it should be made absolutely clear that we do not think it right to prevent arm's-length pubs from enjoying the advantages of a loan tie which have been pressed on us in a number of other cases, including clubs, and which the House welcomed when I made the announcement. We do not think it right to deny arm's-length pubs that right, but they will have the same protection—the capacity to withdraw at three months' notice if they wish—and of course they will be free to take a loan tie from anybody, not necessarily the brewery which owns the pub.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I thank my right hon. Friend and his colleagues for the care with which they have tried to deal with the central issue of the report. As to the disposal of 2,000 pubs, what is my right hon. Friend's estimate of the reduction in the market that will therefore pass from the six major brewers to those who will compete from outside the hallowed circles?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's initial remarks. I cannot make a realistic estimate of the precise changes in the amount of barrelage supplied by one brewer or another. In the short term, despite the arm's-length proposal, it is unlikely that pubs will suddenly decide to change completely from the beer to which their customers are accustomed to another beer. Over a period it is likely substantially to widen the choice available in all pubs.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Does the Minister intend to disband the Monopolies and Mergers Commission? What is the point of a long, independent inquiry on behalf of the consumer if political paymasters can simply lean on the Government and knock it to one side? Is not the Conservative party supposed to be the party of the free market? How can the market be free if the manufacturer is the wholesaler, retailer and landlord? The Monopolies and Mergers Commission is now considering the set-up for petrol stations. Will not the oil companies be laughing all the way to the bank to buy off the Tories at the next election?

Mr. Newton: We do not intend to abolish the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. We shall consider any future recommendations with the same care that we

have devoted to these and, if necessary, take the same substantial steps to address the problems revealed in a report.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Is not the key issue for the beer drinker not who owns the pubs but whose beer he can drink? Will not an extra 11,000 free houses substantially increase consumer choice? Is this not, therefore, a sensible and balanced package that will increase competition but at the same time avoid the worst excesses of an Australian-style scenario for the brewing industry?

Mr. Newton: I very much agree with my hon. Friend, and I am grateful to him.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): Is the Minister aware that the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) about protection for licensees of public houses is of crucial importance, because often it is they who are successful or unsuccessful in running a pub? The Minister has repeatedly referred to consultation. Will he tell the House what that means? Is he aware that in the London borough of Wandsworth there is a small family brewery called Youngs which has a high reputation in the area not only for the quality of its products but for its care of the people who run its pubs and its employees? Is he aware that its chairman sent his observations to the noble Lord Young, yet not only did he not receive a reply but he was not even given the courtesy of an acknowledgement? What sort of consultation is that?

Mr. Newton: I shall look into the latter point. I have said that we shall listen to further thoughts about how far the guest beer provisions should be restricted to beers from smaller or regional brewers. It sounds as though Youngs may make representations on that, which of course we shall welcome.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Will my right hon. Friend accept congratulations on shaking up the pubs without breaking the glasses? Will he give further information about whether the major brewers—who appeared, when the original announcement was made, to prefer to hang on to their pubs rather than their breweries—will be content to continue as brewers and pub owners? Does he accept that, in effect, there are 23,000 more pubs in which there is at least partly free choice for the drinker?

Mr. Newton: I cannot predict precisely the reaction of national brewers. I suspect that they will not show the same enthusiasm as the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) implied for the proposals that we have brought forward. I agree with my hon. Friend that there will be a substantial increase in competition and choice for the consumer.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Why has the Minister sought to dither on the question of guest beer? Why has he not taken a clear decision to establish the principle of the small brewers having access to the supply of guest beer? If he had done that, there would have been an immediate effect on small brewing companies, which would have been building up to provide the capacity to ensure that that part of his proposals was complied with. By delaying, a vacuum in the market may well appear.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is being a little unfair about the position as I described it. There is no doubt that the small local brewers will have access, to use his word, to the guest beer proposal. The issue is whether it should be confined in some way so that only such beers can be guest beers, and that raises more difficult issues.

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his announcement brings good news to the British public, the consumer and the landlord and is particularly good news because it brings competition in the supply of soft drinks and real ale to many pubs?

Mr. Newton: I agree. Insufficient comment has been focused on the issue of soft drinks and alcoholic drinks other than beer, including cider. The effect of the proposals on those drinks will be substantial. The proposals are directed towards one of the main consumer grievances—the high price of drinks, especially soft drinks, in many public houses.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): What action does the Minister intend taking against those brewers who have already given their tenants notice to quit? Those tenants will not be assisted by his proposals. Will he consider giving tenants the right to buy the pubs in which they not only work but live? In view of the Minister's retreat in the face of the brewers' hostility, this seems to be the equivalent of brewer's droop on his part.

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can comment on the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question. I simply ask him to reflect on the extent of the opposition from the TUC and ask him whether he is accusing me of backing down to the TUC. We have sought to produce a set of proposals that meet the anxieties about the original proposals in a way that my hon. Friends have rightly welcomed.

As for the Landlord and Tenant Act, we have sought to strike an appropriate balance. I said in my statement that, should we feel it necessary in the light of the pressures exerted on tenants, my right hon. and noble Friend will be prepared to make an interim order under the Fair Trading Act 1973 to prevent them from being dispossessed, for example, for exercising the new rights that we propose to give them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard for the subsequent business, I shall endeavour to call the hon. Members who have been standing, but I ask for brief questions. We should move on to the next business at about 4.15 pm

Sir Charles Morrison (Devizes): I note the helpful reassurance that my right hon. Friend gave my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) about the rural pub. Is my right hon. Friend aware that some of us retain some fears for the future of the rural pub? Will he please therefore take account of the representations that may be made to him? Will he bear in mind that too often in the past many policies have been perfectly sensible for urban areas but nothing like so good for rural areas?

Mr. Newton: I note what my hon. Friend says. None of us can predict with accuracy the result of the proposals in terms of the balance between urban and rural pubs that may be managed at arm's length. My general view is that the greater freedom that some rural pubs may gain from

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the proposals will enable them to exploit the already considerable natural advantages that exist and, perhaps, strengthen them.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): As lager is the faster growing part of the beer market and as probably the finest lager in the world is brewed in Northampton, am I to understand from my right hon. Friend that the guest beer is to be opened up to lagers, or are we to have no competition in lager?

Mr. Newton: The phrase I used in the statement was "cask-conditioned" beer. I understand that no cask-conditioned lager is manufactured in this country.

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the package of measures announced this afternoon represents a sensible compromise between the views of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the brewing industry? Does he also agree that, above all, the measures emphasise the importance the Government place on promoting competition, which is the best consumer protection policy of all?

Mr. Newton: I very much agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the brewers who have given notice to quit to their tenants represent a tiny minority of the brewing industry and that a number of the larger brewers, such as Whitbread, have issued a reassurance to tenants that there will be no notice to quit and that they welcome the measures announced today?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Come to the question, please.

Mr. Field: Is my right hon. Friend also aware that, like Whitbread, many of the larger brewers have never required tenants to take soft drinks from a single source?

Mr. Newton: Of course, the arrangements made in respect of different tenants and by different brewers vary. I note what my hon. Friend has said, and I very much hope that the responsible approach he reports from one brewer will be followed universally.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will my right hon. Friend, in his discussions with the brewing industry, draw to its attention the continuing concern about the use of restrictive covenants to stop competition, following the case in my own constituency in which a restaurant, which was a pub 37 years ago, has been told that if it wishes the covenant to be lifted it will cost £10,000 and that it will have to continue to use that brewery's beer?

Mr. Newton: I would not wish to comment on a specific case without the opportunity to look into it more fully. However, the general effect of our proposals will be to enhance competition and to reduce the scope for restrictive covenants of all kinds.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the survey which Market Access International carried out among 100 Members of Parliament which showed that only 23 per cent. of Labour Members wished the MMC proposals to be fully implemented? Will my right hon. Friend, therefore, wholly ignore the rantings of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who is clearly seeking to score political points on the issue?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Come to the question, please.

Mr. Riddick: Can my right hon. Friend allay one fear? In countries where the tie does not exist, or in Scotland where there are far fewer tied outlets, there is a far higher brewery concentration and prices are higher as well. Which of his proposals will ensure that that does not happen in this country?

Mr. Newton: The effects of the proposals, taken as a whole and including the removal of the tie in respect of national brewers on non-alcoholic, low-alcohol and soft drinks, combined with the proposals on loan ties and on guest beer, will move us significantly in the direction that my hon. Friend wants.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I thank my right hon. Friend for carrying out and responding to a genuine consultation exercise. However, I ask him for some clarification. Will brewers be free to choose which pubs suffer divestment? Will there be a maximum number of pubs that brewers can hold in various towns? Over what time must divestment take place? There could, otherwise, be an unfairly falsely low market.

Mr. Newton: I will make, briefly, four points in response to my hon. Friend. This is not divestment in the sense in which I thought he was using the word, but a requirement that a given proportion over 2,000 should be operated at arm's length. It will, of course, be for the brewers to decide which of their on-licences they wish to put into that category. The period involved to carry through the changes will be two years. They are large, structural changes to the market. There will then be a review at the end of the third year, after a year's experience of the full effect of the changes.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the public, realising that 23,000 pubs will now be free to sell guest beers and that more than 11,000 of those will be free to sell beers of all types, will not regard that as a climb-down. However, does my right hon. Friend have any proposals to ensure that the big breweries do not try to breach the guest beers rule by swapping lagers or by doing deals between themselves to introduce guest beers? In that sense, local and regional brewers would regard it as a betrayal of the traditions and ideas at stake.

Mr. Newton: I have already said that we are talking about cask-conditioned beers and that no cask-conditioned lagers are manufactured in this country. The other point that my hon. Friend raised is precisely the issue to which we shall give further consideration during the consultation period on the orders. We shall then decide whether some restrictions should be introduced to ensure that guest beer has to come from a small or regional brewer.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this package will be welcomed by consumers, who will especially welcome a greater supply and variety of low-alcohol beers in pubs, and the fact that the prices will come down from their outrageous levels at the moment?

Mr. Newton: Yes, I think that it will have that effect. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his words.

Mr. Gould: Earlier, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster referred to a letter from me and seemed to imply that I had recommended that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report should not be fully applied. As I am sure that he would not wish to mislead the House, will he confirm that my purpose in writing to the Secretary of State was to urge him to apply the report in full and to take further steps to ensure that the major brewers were not able to evade its recommendations? In the event, the brewers did not have to bother as, presumably, they knew all along that Tory party Central Office was already a tied house.

Mr. Newton: I shall seek to respond in the spirit in which the hon. Gentleman made his point. I am grateful for the courteous way in which he did so. He knows that I would not have sought deliberately to distort his views —*[Interruption.]* I do not think that I did so, but if I did in any way, of course I apologise.

The point that I was making was simply that, when the hon. Gentleman wrote to my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State shortly after the publication of the report at the end of March, he saw clear dangers—that is the word that the hon. Gentleman used—in the MMC proposals on tied houses and he asked us to guard against two threats. He now takes the view that the action that we have taken, which as we see it guards successfully against those threats, is not the right action. However, he must agree that, while wanting to go at least as far as the MMC, he was not himself endorsing the exact detail of its recommendations.

Points of Order

4.17 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I rise briefly to ask, through you, Mr. Speaker, whether later this week the Leader of the House might be able to use his good offices to arrange for a Foreign Office statement on the position of the hostages in Beirut. This arises following contact that some colleagues had earlier today with the friends of John McCarthy, and with Jill Morrell in particular, following the sad news of Mrs. McCarthy's death at the weekend.

It would be a great reassurance to all those involved in seeking to achieve John McCarthy's release, and that of other citizens who are in a similarly hellish position, if the House were to extend its sympathy to the McCarthy family today and if the Leader of the House could grant my request later in the week.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that the whole House will have heard the sad news to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. I shall, of course, refer the matter to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and ask him to consider it.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your help regarding the need for a statement on the National Health Service in Wales, because there is immense resistance to the Government's proposals in the Health Service White Paper. For several weeks my hon. Friends have pressed the Leader of the House in business questions for a Health Service debate in the Welsh Grand Committee.

It will help you, Mr. Speaker, to know that on 1 March the Secretary of State for Wales promised a debate on the White Paper. That promise is recorded in *Hansard*. However, we have had no such debate. The Secretary of State for Wales has refused to make a statement on the matter. Moreover, although working papers on the White Paper for England have been supplied, the Secretary of State for Wales has not given the people of Wales any working papers, although he promised such working papers on 1 March.

We demand a debate before the House rises. We demand the papers relating to the National Health Service in Wales. We demand that the Secretary of State for Wales comes to the Grand Committee or to the House because these matters are of crucial importance to the people of Wales. They are important to our valleys, to the rural areas, to the medical profession and to all our people. We believe that the Secretary of State for Wales is running away from an important matter.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you confirm that there is an Opposition day next Monday and that if Opposition Members feel so strongly about the matter, they could arrange a debate for that day?

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to draw to your attention one aspect of the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). In reply to an intervention made by me in the St.

[Mr. Ted Rowlands]

David's day debate on 1 March, the Secretary of State for Wales said that the Welsh Office would be preparing papers that week or soon after. It is now July and we have not a single paper on the Health Service in Wales before us, months after that commitment was given. Surely that should justify our demand for a statement and debate if nothing else does.

Mr. Wakeham: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I shall certainly look into the question of papers, although the question of a debate is more directly my responsibility. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) is right to say that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales said:

"I hope that we shall debate the White Paper in the Welsh Grand Committee".—[*Official Report*, 1 March 1989; Vol. 148, c. 302.]

The Secretary of State and the members of the Welsh Grand Committee knew that its next meeting would be on 6 April, when the subject for debate was to be chosen by the Opposition. The Opposition chose to debate a matter other than the Health Service, which was a disappointment to everybody concerned. The next debate in the Welsh Grand Committee was just a short time ago, on 28 June, when the subject was chosen by the Government's supporters, who chose the valleys programme because that day was its first anniversary and, therefore, an appropriate occasion. Clearly, both sides of the House would welcome a Grand Committee debate on the Health Service; it is a question of when is the most appropriate time to organise it, and that is a matter for discussion through the usual channels. The Committee meets about every two months; it met recently, on 28 June; we shall do our best but we cannot make any promises.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda) *rose*——

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore) *rose*——

Mr Speaker: I shall call the hon. Member who is the Welsh Whip, then we must move on.

Mr. Powell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not have a copy of *Hansard* before me, but I recall that in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on 22 June, the Leader of the House said that we would have a debate on the Health Service before the summer recess. That was the promise. I repeat what I said last Thursday at business questions. I do not want to take the time of the House, but having promised that, the Leader of the House told me that I had no confidence in the usual channels. My confidence will wane still further if we cannot have a debate on the Health Service in Wales in the Welsh Grand Committee.

Mr. Wakeham: I have the words in front of me, and I said nothing of the sort.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), who is the Whip on the Grand Committee, said that this matter was raised at business questions last Thursday. This is not business questions, and I remind hon. Members that a large number of hon. Members wish to participate in a subsequent debate. It is unfair for Front-Bench spokesmen to seek to take Back-Bench Members' time.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I will hear the hon. Gentleman, but I shall bear it in mind when he speaks in future.

Mr. Rogers: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can I say as an hon. Member elected by my constituents that I take very badly the threat that you have just issued——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rogers: As to when——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Please sit down. It was not a threat. I must have regard for the hon. Members who wish to speak in the subsequent debate. I was merely saying to the hon. Gentleman—and it is absolutely true—that a large number of hon. Members wish to participate and may be disappointed.

Mr. Rogers: I may be Welsh, Mr. Speaker, but I can certainly understand English.

In his response to my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) the Leader of the House deliberately misled the House by suggesting that the Opposition——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that he cannot use the phrase "deliberately misled."

Mr. Rogers: All right, the Leader of the House inadvertently misled the House, and perhaps he will take this opportunity to retract what he said in his reply. The Leader of the House suggested that the Opposition had the opportunity on two occasions to bring a debate on the National Health Service to the Welsh Grand Committee. However, the right hon. Gentleman obviously has not been informed by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales of the fact that the working papers prepared by the Secretary of State for Wales were not ready for debate on those occasions.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not going to hear any more, in fairness to other hon. Members.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will have to call the shadow Leader of the House. However, I must again make the point that today is a rare opportunity for Back Benchers to participate in a debate on Select Committee reports. The hon. Gentleman's point of order will unquestionably be to their detriment.

Mr. Dobson: I want to raise an entirely separate point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you received any representations from the Secretary of State for Defence asking to come to the House to make a statement about the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the untruths about Birkbeck college which were published in *The Mail on Sunday* and *The Sunday Times* on 2 July? The Ministry of Defence denied the truth of those accounts on the following Tuesday. It now appears that those stories got

into those two newspapers because they were being peddled by public officials—press officers of the Ministry of Defence. In those circumstances, we believe that it is right and proper that the Secretary of State for Defence should come to the House and explain which of the 217 MOD press officers were involved, how they came to be peddling those lies and what disciplinary action he intends to take.

Mr. Speaker: I have received no representations about a statement on that matter.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the four motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No. 4) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1088) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Inter-American Development Bank (Seventh General Increase) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Appropriation (No. 3) (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

ESTIMATES DAY

[3RD ALLOTTED DAY]

ESTIMATES 1989-90

Class VI, Vote 3

Department of Energy

[Relevant document: Fourth Report from the Energy Committee of Session 1988-89 on the Department of Energy's spending plans: 1989-90 (House of Commons Paper No. 435)]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a further sum, not exceeding £24,044,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1990 for expenditure by the Department of Energy on salaries and other administrative costs.—*[Mr. Michael Spicer.]*

4.26 pm

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): I am sure that Back Benchers on both sides of the House will have noted with great pleasure the energetic and forceful way in which you, Mr. Speaker, sought to protect our time. We value these opportunities to debate matters that come before our Select Committees and we believe that it is in the interests of the House and the country that we should have opportunities to comment.

I hope that my Committee, the Select Committee on Energy, has discharged its annual obligation to consider the Estimates of the Department of Energy and in particular to consider chapter 6 of the public expenditure White Paper and class VI of the Supply Estimates.

Last year when we undertook a similar task, we requested that the Department of Energy should improve its performance indicators and achieve a greater consistency of presentation. I am glad to say that it is the general view of the Select Committee that the performance indicators have been greatly improved and broadened and we look forward to that process being continued. We cannot yet make a judgment about the consistency of presentation because that is an ongoing objective which the Department will consider from time to time and from year to year, and obviously the Select Committee will consider that in due course.

The first subject on which I want to concentrate—the coal mining industry—has probably occupied most of the time of the Select Committee. In many senses, coal mining is a primary industry to this country and it imposes a primary financial burden on the state. There is no dispute about the fact that the industry's subsidies have been vast and are apparently unending, whatever its scale of operation. The industry's scale of operation has undoubtedly been reduced quite dramatically over the past decade.

We are concerned about the uncertainty of the industry's finance forecasts. However much year by year is budgeted by the Department and the Government in March, more appears to be required by October and this year is no exception. According to the exact figures in the public expenditure White Paper, the requirement from the state in January was estimated at £560 million; in February the Secretary of State told us that that figure would rise to £720 million and in July we were told that

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there would be a summer Supplementary Estimate of £250 million which the Committee was told in evidence was "a temporary blip". All I can say is that it is some blip and, unfortunately, the evidence does not seem to support the use of the adjective "temporary", but we all hope that it is. We hope that, because of Sir Robert Haslam's undoubted achievements and leadership, these forecasts will be fulfilled. Nevertheless, some of us remain sceptical, and I think that that scepticism probably spreads throughout the Committee.

Break-even always seems to be about 18 months ahead. I suspect that what we are really looking at is a national reluctance to face facts whenever we examine the coal mining industry. There seems to be a genuine inability to conclude that the horizon is always receding and that we will never quite get there. I wonder whether we are being ground between the upper and the nether millstones. The upper millstone—I think that all members of Committee are agreed on this—is the fact that there is no secure substitute for plus or minus 100 million tonnes of indigenously mined coal. Whether it is deep mined or opencast is another matter, but there is no clear and secure substitute for it. I emphasise the word "secure". A great deal of argument can take place about what that means in different contexts.

The nether millstone is the fact that there seems to be no way in which our coal can be mined at world market prices, and no possible way of predicting exactly what those prices would be if we imported 50 or 60 per cent. of our national coal requirement.

The volume of international trade in coal and the competition is such that, in my judgment, the scope for market exploitation is small, although I fully understand and accept that there are many views on this question and that they cover a wide spectrum and are legitimately held.

Since there are no easy solutions, the Committee, considering the contemporary scene—it has tried to do so as specifically as it can—deplores the negotiating uncertainties which appeared to start between the South of Scotland electricity board and British Coal in Scotland, and which still seem to be hovering over the industry in a rather unfortunate way.

I think it is the view of the Committee that national policy—this is still a matter of national policy because neither coal nor electricity has effectively been privatised yet—should not be settled in the courts. Both are still in the public sector so there is a considerable obligation on the state to take the leaders of these two great and important industries by the hand and say to them, "For heaven's sake, get on with it and achieve a settlement." Even if both industries were in the private sector, there would still be such an obligation because it is in the national interest not to keep matters suspended indefinitely so that the managements of both major industries do not know where they are.

The additional £250 million Supplementary Estimate which the Secretary of State has asked for is discussed in some detail in paragraph 5 of our report. We noted there, with some dismay, that we were given four reasons for the extra money: mild weather, higher interest rates, accelerated closure costs and the repayment of existing loans. The Committee was somewhat dissatisfied with this explanation, first, because we thought that all those factors could probably have been guesstimated at least somewhat more accurately further ahead and, secondly, because we felt that £250 million is too large a figure to be swept under the carpet in a one-line explanation.

On the broader question whether these matters would occur in some different institution or organisation, I should say that privatisation would not necessarily guarantee that the problems would be solved; nor would it alter the need for a national view to be taken, first, on whether coal should be mined; secondly, on how much coal should be mined; thirdly, at what cost coal should be mined—and certainly at what cost to the nation; and, fourthly, for what purpose coal should be mined.

That brings me to the other question that will not be eliminated by changing the structure or ownership of the industry. That question can be divided into separate parts. Again, the change that is foreseen will not necessarily solve the problem and eliminate these questions. One question is whether and to what extent the social obligation that will remain if we decide to keep a major coal mining industry in the United Kingdom should be borne directly by subsidy, indirectly through the price mechanism, or by a combination of the two. That is another way of describing the inevitable distribution of any burden resulting from a coal mining policy between the private consumer, the industrial consumer and the taxpayer.

Those questions will not easily be answered. If the record of the past 20 to 30 years is any guide—I do not share the most optimistic forecasts—those questions will be with us for the next 10 years. Whatever the answer may be, equivocation and uncertainty would be the worst possible outcome. Wherever possible, equivocation and uncertainty should be removed.

Perhaps optimistically and hopefully, in our report we used the phrase

"a strong and competitive indigenous industry."

If the coal mining industry is a high-productivity industry, and it is becoming so at considerable and welcome speed, it will be competitive. Although recent productivity improvements have been dramatic, no solution is yet in sight.

The industry has received about £20 billion in subsidy, without achieving its target. It has borrowed and remains in debt to the extent of £4·3 billion. To illustrate the scale of that problem—generally speaking, such large numbers are lost to the public and to most hon. Members—that debt of £4·3 billion represents £86 per head of the population, and the total subsidy so far represents £430 per head of the population. Therefore, the Committee strongly supports new, specific and quantified objectives. They must be new if we are to solve the problem. They must be specific if we are to make sensible judgments about them. Obviously, if we are to be able to make policy measurements, they must be quantified.

The Committee was delighted that, almost uniquely among the major Departments of state, the Department of Energy described its research policy and performance in about 12 pages of "The Government's Expenditure Plans for 1989-90." That excellent example should be widely noted. None the less, some definitions are not sufficiently rigorous. For example, the figures under research and development include non-research and development elements. That can be clearly discerned from time to time. Also, energy efficiency monitoring and targeting are included under research and development, when they could not accurately be so described. Similarly, some

non-research and development nuclear programmes have been brought together under nuclear research and development. Again, that gives a slightly inaccurate and misleading figure when we should be able to know very precisely how much is being spent, where it is being spent and what the objectives are. The general analysis is greatly improved, and we look forward to seeing a continuation of it.

Energy efficiency is of increasing prominence. My Committee was in slight difficulty with that matter. Having taken evidence on the greenhouse effect over the past six or eight months, we are about to report to the House—a week from today—in great detail about energy efficiency in the context of the greenhouse effect. However, we felt that, in the light of the policy set down in the estimates, we could draw attention to what the Department is doing at the moment in some matters and what its priorities are.

Recently, the Committee visited the research installation at Grimethorpe and we were impressed by what we saw there. We were somewhat disturbed by the equivocation surrounding certain projects and the uncertainty, which was obviously having a depressing effect on the morale of those involved. If energy efficiency is as important as we shall suggest that it is in a few days' time, there is no doubt that the Grimethorpe project is one of the technologies that should be explored either to success or destruction, whichever the research proves. It should not be left in suspension, hanging and uncertain.

A great deal of work has been done in this country, in the United States and elsewhere, into energy renewables, and various suggestions have been made about what contribution these might ultimately make to energy supply in the United Kingdom. Although I have seen figures as high as 20 per cent., these generally seem to follow rather over-optimistic assessments both of the costs and of the technologies. More generally, fairly small figures, of perhaps between 5 and 6 per cent., are realistic targets. One then has to conclude that if renewables are to make a significant contribution to energy consumption—as everyone hopes, and as they must—a great deal more work is required on them.

The next issue to which I should like to draw the attention of the House is the more complex and controversial one of fast breeder reactors. The Committee is suspending its judgment because we have decided that we should undertake a full-scale inquiry into this important subject, and that will be starting towards the end of the year. In the meantime, it is our view that the research and development work on the post-thermal reactor technology should continue and should not be seriously reduced in any way.

In that context I—like, I imagine, other members of the Committee—was somewhat surprised and disturbed to see late last week an advertisement published in all the national newspapers by a large number of scientists, including 15 distinguished fellows of the Royal Society. They said, effectively, that nuclear power provides no realistic, safe, or possible solution to our energy problems. I find that extremely disturbing, although I have the greatest respect, as the House knows, for scientific opinion and judgment. If those 15 members of the Royal Society who signed that statement had listened to all the evidence presented to my Committee and waited one week for the report of the Committee, which is to be published next Monday, I wonder whether they would still adhere to the view that we need not, cannot and should not develop nuclear power. My judgment is that many of them, being distinguished scientists, and essentially the most rational of human beings, would reverse that judgment.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I am encouraged to hear that the Committee will specifically conduct an inquiry into the future of the fast breeder reactor and associated issues. What time scale does the hon. Gentleman envisage for its report, and when will it be published? He will appreciate the great concern in the northern part of Scotland about the dislocation that the effective rundown of Dounreay is causing, and the controversy that that is generating on all sides.

Sir Ian Lloyd: I should imagine that the Committee would start the procedure for inviting memoranda fairly soon—probably the beginning of September. The notice of this inquiry has been published. Those parties who are likely to be principal witnesses will doubtless already be preparing their evidence to the Committee. However, I think it unlikely that the Committee will be taking verbal evidence before the House resumes in October or November and, if experience is any guide, it is unlikely that the Committee will be reporting on this inquiry, which is both important and complex, within the first four or five months of next year. We shall obviously proceed with great expedition, in view of the general importance of the subject.

Another important matter is energy efficiency in the public sector. We knew that it was large, but it always comes as a surprise when one realises that the public sector —that is public buildings owned by the Government or public authorities—spent £1·8 billion on energy in the most recent year for which figures are available. We give that information in paragraph 20. That is a large sum, and we are somewhat disturbed that progress in improving efficiency of energy conservation in the public sector is less rapid than it might otherwise have been.

Since the report was published, I had the occasion to visit a major hospital, which I shall not name, although there is no reason why I should not, in the Portsmouth area. I discovered two interesting points. The hospital management told me that the hospital was designed for an average winter temperature of not less than 34 deg. and if the temperature falls below that the management has considerable doubt about whether it can maintain the right temperature in the wards so that it can avoid the conditions leading to hypothermia. I found that a rather dramatic conclusion because I realised that if this is the way in which we have been building hospitals, at least within the past 20 to 30 years, it shows a surprising lack of attention to energy efficiency.

I was told that the difference in the energy bill for one major hospital between one year and another could be as much as £1 million. If that is so, it reinforces the Committee's conclusion that this is something to which the Government must pay the closest attention.

I have now a general question that has assumed an increasing prominence in the debate in the press within the past few months, and that is the need for a Department of Energy. We discuss this in paragraphs 26 and 27. It is a broad and controversial subject and, again, there is room for many points of view. I speak only for myself on this occasion, but I hope that I can speak somewhat more objectively than I might otherwise have been able to do because, in almost all probability, I shall not be opening

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the debate on the Energy Department's estimates next year, although I hope to be around. Therefore, I speak with objectivity when I say that I reinforce everything that the Committee has concluded. This is not the right time to disband, dismantle or move around the Department of Energy.

Energy, as a major subject with enormous political implications, is rising into increasing prominence, almost with every month that passes. That does not suggest that now is the time to disperse a major and important Department among other Departments of state, however competent. Whatever the other arguments may be for such a dispersion and reorganisation of Government, the Department of Energy is an essential means for focusing attention on national energy policies. It will be far better if that is done centrally under a Secretary of State for Energy rather than peripherally by any other Secretary of State who has energy matters as a subsection of his Department.

I have no axe to grind. The words in paragraph 27 are largely mine and I am glad to say that the Committee endorsed them. I believe that the work of the Department and the Select Committee must continue, because together they will get it right.

4.49 pm

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): It is convenient for me to respond to the Chairman of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd), by beginning my contribution on the expenditure report and on the work of the Select Committee by emphasising the importance of the Department of Energy.

I have spent many years in this House; this is my 25th. I spent many years with the old Science and Technology Select Committee, which became the Select Committee on Energy. Over the years during our hearings upstairs we have been privileged to see the growing competence of the people who serve in and represent the Department of Energy. We have many controversial cross-examining procedural requirements, merely to satisfy the thirst of Parliament. It is not a titillating exercise; it suits my personality to be aggravating, aggresive and questioning. That is what Parliament is about. In those years we have seen some excellent officers—excellent at stonewalling, at remarkable revelations and, sometimes, at confessions. Nevertheless, the Department is important to Parliament.

I shall seek to suggest, perhaps in a slightly different way from the Chairman of the Select Committee, how I look upon the significance of the Department of Energy, the importance of the parliamentary role in the work and development of energy policy and resources, and the paramount importance of public interest.

In any kind of human activity there must be one essentially striking objective—what it is expected to do. I pose that question in relation to the activities of the Department of Energy. The answer is not difficult or original. Our linguistic facilities do not give us the opportunity to be innovative in this regard. As Lord Rothschild would say, it is self-evident. The Department of Energy is expected to meet national energy needs, but the question is how best to use our energy resources. All things spring from that and therefore the desired objectives must be a corollary to that main pillar that substantiates the need for some central place in which to discuss such matters.

As we are talking about energy and the use of it, there must be, above all things, the highest standards of safety. Related to that we must have the infrastructure required to produce the best regulatory conditions, licensing conditions where they apply and planning conditions. It is also necessary to satisfy the consumer, the people who matter, those who pay. I believe that it is difficult to divide consumers from workers because they produce. It is also important to have efficiency of supply. Research and development must play a supportive role and we must have policies to assist such development in the public or private sector.

In the exploration of the North sea we must have a substantial offshore share of the industrial activity. Therefore, we need a central base, a controlling edge, to encourage the highest levels of competition. One important essential objective is the ability to control and monitor. At all times there should be a national register of what is happening and how it is controlled in the nation's interest.

There is also a need for co-ordination in normal and emergency conditions. In the widening sphere of privatisation Parliament should be more concerned about co-ordination at times of natural disasters and other emergencies. The promotion of energy conservation must also spring from the centre. It cannot be left to the tides that flow from profits and deficits. It must be a positive policy so that energy conservation is as essential to our energy requirements as the physical resources. Such objectives should also include a concentrated dynamic and continuous flow of resources and the ingenuity of professional minds directed towards exploiting renewables.

I have followed the Chairman's theme by asserting that there is a need for a central place where such purposes and objectives can be pursued. Three basic elements are required to meet such objectives. First, we want a Department that is efficient and economically effective. Secondly, the role of energy in the economy must be promoted effectively. Thirdly, there must be co-ordination between the Department, industry, commerce and the public utilities to achieve an effective national role and to provide an international lead regarding the policies and resources requirements that will meet the targets of the Toronto agreement and that will reduce the greenhouse effect of present burn technologies.

The national interest is best served by effective national involvement in the use of our energy resources—oil, gas, coal, nuclear and conservational renewables—whatever the conditions of public or private ownership. Once we have considered those overall objectives and purposes the need for a Department of Energy becomes imperative. My experience, as I have suggested already, shows that there is no doubt about that.

Any transfer of subject heads from the Department of Energy to other Departments would invite a disparate condition. Such a transfer would mean that energy policy became ineffective, remote, subservient to the mainstream activities of other Departments and out of touch with the reality that means that energy is paramount in our lives. Energy is at the commanding heights of priorities and urgency given its ability to stimulate the economy and to improve the physical and climatic environment.

Exuberance about having a Department of Energy must be tempered with a degree of prudence. We have the report of the Energy Select Committee before us, and I am pleased that the Select Committee on the Environment has also produced a report about the way in which the Property Services Agency's estimates for the cost of a new Department of Energy headquarters have stumbled from £4·5 million in 1987 to more than £12·5 million.

We can only assume from that that there have been delays and disruptions. Whatever the excuses, one thing is certain: the original proposal could not have been thoroughly thought out. Perhaps the less we say about that, the better. By using those words, I am not suggesting that something dramatically untoward has happened, merely that the National Audit Office has decided to look into these disparities and, in due course, the House will be able to learn what went wrong, why delays occurred and what the disruptions were. Having made out the case for the Department of Energy with a great deal of enthusiasm, I was wanting only the accommodation it needed, and no more.

There are many issues involving millions of people which relate to energy. However, even now, we have no energy policy, or only a very vague one. In the new fashion of dispersal and the Government's abrogation of their responsibilities, there is a likelihood that there will be no policy at all. In that case, how will Parliament have an effective role to play? Any energy strategy works broadly within the parameters of nuclear and non-nuclear development and promotion. When the expenditure plans are directed towards investment and restructuring, the people are interested in the impact of both and neither is the monopoly of Government or private enterprise. The extent of nuclear development, its location and share in the power programme is a matter for the people. They are directly involved.

In the non-nuclear sphere, the coal industry's share in the power programme is of paramount importance to whole communities. The exploration of oil and gas and its impact on the economy concerns the people, and only through Parliament can the people find effective expression of their national interests as workers, consumers and shareholders in the environment. Our report mirrored that fact. We referred to the fast breeder programme and doubted whether the guessing game of commercial opportunity in 40 years' time justified the running down of Dounreay by 1994. The Chairman of the Select Committee has indicated that this issue is of sufficient importance for us to look at it in the timescale which he has described to the House.

We have expressed concern about the levels of research and development and the difficulty of identifying in the estimates its range and nature. We have also expressed concern about the reduction of financial support to the Energy Efficiency Office. We mentioned the ending of the energy efficiency survey scheme, in which we discovered that for every £1 of public money spent there was £13 worth of savings and millions of pounds—in some cases, a 20 per cent. reduction in bills—of the participating organisations were saved. Why that scheme was brought to an end puzzles many members of the Select Committee. These and other examples affect the public and show the need for Parliament to assert and protect its role of questioning and challenging in a Department which is totally involved in the matters we are discussing.

There is one outstanding example. I hope that the country and Parliament will join together in finding how best to bring to an end a tendency which brings unnecessary hardship to whole communities—the acceleration of coal mine closures. We should respond with much gratitude to that special kind of man called a miner. He is unique because over the decades he has inculcated in our minds a sense of loyalty, sometimes misplaced, which has brought about a record for which hon. Members should be generously grateful.

In 1985, we had 169 collieries; this year we have 94. As was suggested earlier, there is only one colliery left in Scotland. This position was brought about by the stupid, silly and irresponsible bickering of two chairmen, one of the electricity board and the other of the coal board, who would not get round a table and act like decent human beings. Instead they used our money for costly litigation, while Shell brought in imported coal, not in bulk carriers, but in small ships through small ports in Scotland. They did that at a loss to themselves, using the loss leader so that when they obtained the contracts they would make more profit, while our miners lost their jobs. As I have said, the number of collieries has been nearly halved.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): I have listened carefully to the exposé and analysis of my hon. Friend. He mentioned the present position in Scotland where we have only one colliery left, Monktonhall, and the difficulties surrounding the litigation which is taking place between the South of Scotland electricity board and British Coal. My hon. Friend said that one aspect of energy policy should be security of supply. The South of Scotland electricity board decided, at the end of last year and the beginning of this, to import 1 million tonnes of Chinese coal. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is hardly a country of political stability and would not necessarily give us security of supply in relation to energy?

Mr. Leadbitter: My hon. Friend has a profound knowledge of the energy industry and was a Front-Bench spokesman on the subject. There can be no doubt about the factual accuracy of his intervention or the serious conclusion which he has drawn.

There were 171,000 people in the industry in 1985, and that figure is down to 89,000. The daily output of tonnes of the long wall face was 845,000 in 1985 and, with a dramatically lower labour force, that figure has gone up by 35 to 45 per cent. to 1,458 tonnes. The operating cost to obtain coal has been reduced from £42·48 per tonne to £38·25 per tonne. That is a graphic, elementary, statistical thumbnail sketch of coal mining performance—fewer coal miners and collieries, but a remarkable increase in productivity. By 1987, productivity had increased by 70 per cent. as against the pre-strike level and this year it has increased by 19 per cent. on last year's level.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): No one can deny the statistics which the hon. Gentleman has adduced in support of his argument, but does he think that the events immediately before 1985 had anything to do with what has happened in the past four years?

Mr. Leadbitter: All activities that impinge on an industry have something to do with it. Whether they are of great magnitude is a matter to arrive at by analysis. There was a strike in the coal industry and that was unfortunate. It brought about an incredible state of affairs—the nearest

[Mr. Leadbitter]

thing I have seen to the creation of a police state. Aggravation was heaped upon aggravation, but that is not relevant to this debate.

The rate of productivity after the strike showed that nothing was in the minds of those who worked in the pits but a desire to make a success of the industry this time. All, including the management, have worked extremely hard to put this unfortunate past behind them.

However, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) reminds me that he has been to South Africa. We are all concerned about apartheid—I have never seen such unanimity in the House as there is against it. But there is apartheid in this country. Miners who have never been found guilty of an offence are still refused their jobs back. Such men are deprived of their jobs against the background of their kith and kin increasing productivity by 70 per cent. since the strike and by another 19 per cent. in the past year.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): The strike came about because of the stupidity of the then chairman of the board and of the Conservative Government. If the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) had spent as much time looking into the situation in this country as he had travelling to South Africa he would probably be better acquainted with the facts.

The miners wanted the dispute to go to the tribunal which was set up between the coal board and the union, but the Government refused to participate in it. I find it rather strange that that same Government are now arguing——

Mr. Michael Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is very interesting and important but, as a member of the Select Committee, may I say that I have read its report and I can see no connection between what we are supposed to be debating and the hon. Gentleman's remarks of the past few moments——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) is pushing at the fringes of the subject. Perhaps he will now have regard to the terms of the debate.

Mr. Leadbitter: I certainly agree with your advice and ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it was a bit naughty and cheeky of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes to say that, because he raised the point in the first place. However, the House is forgiving and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are understanding——

Mr. Brown: If I was responsible for subsequent events I must accept my share of responsibility and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, might want to reprimand me for my original intervention.

Mr. Leadbitter: As usual, the hon. Gentleman apologises in the nicest possible way.

To return to my analysis, given the indisputable figures showing productivity up, and the pursuit of policies seeking to produce a degree of financial viability, and the hopes based on projections made in 1987 that the industry would have broken even this year, it is not without significance that British Coal showed an operational profit of about £500 million—a figure about which I am willing to be corrected if necessary.

The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes asked what other factors lay behind this improvement and pinpointed the strike as a major cause. Increasing competition from other fuels, unstable but lower oil prices than in the 1970s, inflation and high interest rates and the costs of servicing debt—these elements completely wipe out the operational benefits of the policies and productivity of management and men.

Also, a new term has crept into energy vocabulary—restructuring. It means accelerating closures and decreasing investment, which will fall from £650 million to about £500 million in 1992. That will help to make the books look good. But it is important for the House to consider the other costs involved. To pay for the restructuring programme, £311 million will be needed to pay off miners and to close pits—a high price to pay. No one yet has mentioned the social costs and the multiplier costs of a declining industry. No one has mentioned the knock-on costs arising from the closure of companies that supply the industry. Nevertheless, this restructuring will make the books look good.

Finally, imported coal is beginning to impinge on this country. More of it is arriving from some peculiar places and it is more than likely that it is produced by using cheap labour. This country can match the world in mining equipment and technology—we sell it to America, for instance—but we are using less and less of it here. Did we not learn the lessons of 1973, when oil prices hit the roof and everyone proposed not using oil? We did not. Oil prices have fallen to about $18 a barrel, so now everyone suggests using the cheapest fuel that we can get. The national interest should not depend on short-term price oscillations, however. That is a wrong philosophy and a wrong policy.

Let us look at the cost of regenerating industries in communities that have lost their livelihood. For every 2,000 people working in a pit community there is a tradesman to look after the service needs of the families. The social cost of keeping people idle is high. Does the House understand that it costs nearly £8,000 a year to service a man's idleness? My constituency has a high level of unemployment, although, blessedly, it is now falling. Each unemployed person would welcome a job on even £7,000 a year.

What a daft country Britain has become. What a silly, miserable, pettifogging idea it is to squander resources instead of using a lesser amount to promote the ingenuity and adaptability of our work force. Britain is not weak in the way that people abroad have tried to describe it. It is stultified by political blindness. It is more important in Downing street to overcome a peripheral crisis than to get hold of the broader issues in our country and provide a better deal for our people.

Our Select Committee report impinges upon the economy, upon our social well-being. It seeks to try to understand attitudes that are out of place with the modern dynamism that is required to keep this country great, our people at work and our economy healthy. There are a couple of million people out of work at an approximate cost of £8,000 per person. If we all sit down and do nothing, we will end by having nothing to pay ourselves.

The time has come for a Select Committee report to show that we must maximise the use of our energy resources. We must magnify the importance of the problem and invest in means that conserve energy and promote its better use. We must also provide the kind of

investment that will exploit to the full our indigenous energy resources—in this case coal. If we let coal die, a little bit of Britain, nay, a pretty big bit of Britain, will die with it.

In Britain a disease, a cancer, has stricken the shipbuilding industry, not because it was incapable but because politicians felt that that was the way to go. What has happened to the steel industry? Oh yes, it is making a profit, but once Britain was the largest steelmaker in Europe. Now our steel industry is but a major tiddlywink. One does not have to think twice before saying that, if our shipbuilding and steel industries and the use of coal are built up, Britain will not be the poor neighbour that some people in Europe seek to call it. We need to build up those industries, to invest in them and to put people to work in them. More than that, we must take note of the fine men who worked with fine officers, not only in the Department of Energy but throughout industry, to produce some guidelines about how Britain could make good in a way that will make it the pride of Europe. We will make energy tops if we say yes and keep the Department.

5.25 pm

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): I am grateful for the opportunity to follow the thoughtful, important and constructive contribution by the Chairman of our Select Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd). I am also happy to follow the equally thoughtful, important and constructive but somewhat more controversial contribution of the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter).

I wish to concentrate on the energy efficiency budget that is exposed in the report. I readily declare an interest, which is well known to the House, as a consultant to a major energy management company. The energy efficiency budget, which was never a large percentage of the total Department budget, has been cut from £20 million last year to £15 million in the current year, and it is planned to reduce it further. I make no special point about that, as I accept that spending more money does not necessarily achieve more results. However, I wish to question, and not for the first time, the Government's priorities in their energy efficiency programme, and those are not necessarily reflected in a reduced budget.

The Government admit that there is still huge potential for improving energy efficiency, but they appear to believe that consumers are now well aware of that and will make their own decisions. In other words, the Government believe that investment in energy efficiency will go ahead because it is cost effective and because consumers realise that they will benefit by saving money. The Government are saying that market forces will do the trick. Nobody believes more in the market economy than I do, but I also believe that the market needs the right consumer signals. The Government's energy efficiency policy now needs a much higher overall priority in Government strategy. Much can and should be done which does not necessarily require increased expenditure but, rather, policy decisions. Let us look at regulation as one example. All my hon. Friends are reluctant to accept unnecessary regulation, and I share their philosophy. However, we need stronger guidance on building regulations and on energy labelling of appliances, as other countries have found. It is not good enough to try for 10 years to get voluntary agreement and progress in those areas.

Some years ago we saw the introduction of energy labelling for car efficiency. Nobody objects to that and it has worked as an important yardstick for the consumer. We accept regulation—perhaps reluctantly at first—in every other area of life. We accepted regulations for seat belts and we accept safety regulations wherever we regard them as necessary and in our own best interests.

It is time that we imposed a little more regulation in order to provide stronger signals to the consumer and to encourage the promotion of energy efficiency. I base that argument on the belief that energy efficiency is much more important than it was some years ago. The main thrust of the debate used to be that we must conserve energy because it is a finite resource, we are short of it, and it will run out. The main argument in support of greater energy efficiency today and tomorrow will surely relate to environmental factors.

If, within a few years, scientists reach a consensus that global warming is the greatest threat to future existence on this planet, further action will have to be taken. The consensus of opinion to the Committee, to the Government and to the Downing street conference is that in the meantime energy efficiency should be promoted, where it is cost effective, as an insurance policy if the day shortly comes when scientists agree that we have to take further and major international action to reduce the levels of carbon dioxide. Regulation must, therefore, play some part, but it is only a partial contribution.

What is needed, in addition to a little more regulation, is a priority programme of incentives. Again, however, we are faced with a Conservative philosophy dilemma. We do not believe that the free market needs to be motivated, but it does. If market forces are to operate, they need incentives. The Government have applied that policy in every other area. We believe that it is right to provide incentives to people to buy their own homes. That is why we give huge tax offsets to people with mortgages. We also believe that it is right that people should make provision for their own pensions, so we give them tax incentives. We believe, too, that the market signals are not strong enough to encourage home-produced food, so we give huge subsidies to agriculture. That is not challenged. We give all sorts of strong market signals by using the fiscal system to promote objectives that we regard as desirable. Why else do we spend taxpayers' money on urban renewal, job creation, huge training programmes and regional grants? We provide tax incentives to promote objectives that we regard as economically or socially desirable.

I believe that energy efficiency should also be regarded as a priority. If the market were achieving the energy efficiency objectives that the Government seek, my argument would be irrelevant, but it is not. My hon. Friend the Member for Havant reminded us that the energy bill for the buildings and other places controlled by Government, such as the National Health Service, is £1·8 billion a year. It is conceded that we could achieve a 20 per cent. saving by means of cost-effective investment in energy efficiency which would have a short pay-back period, yet that is not happening. Despite the Government's initiative, announced last January, to promote that investment, we have still not been given any answers about when the programme will start, what is to be spent on it, what monitoring there will be and what the pay-back period will be.

Furthermore, energy efficiency is not happening adequately enough and fast enough in the rest of the

[Mr. Peter Rost]

economy. We all know that there is a short pay-back period for much of the investment in industry and in domestic areas, but it is not happening because the market signals are not strong enough. One might argue that the Government did not need to reduce the tax on lead-free petrol to encourage people to buy it because there was already a differential. However, the Government reduced the tax and widened the differential. They intervened directly in the free market to provide a stronger signal. The same argument applies to energy efficiency, but it must now be regarded as a priority.

There is a major inconsistency in the Government's strategy. We apply one rule to energy efficiency—that the market will sort it out and we do not need to interfere—and we apply a completely different rule to all other areas of Government policy—the tax incentives in all sorts of areas, to which I have already referred.

There is even greater inconsistency and illogicality about the Government's overall energy strategy. Huge subsidies have been provided to the coal industry. We have allocated a special slot to the nuclear industry; we have protected it by means of extra subsidy. Now, for the first time, we are encouraging renewables by means of the special protection that is provided in the Electricity Bill. Coal has always been protected and the nuclear industry is now being subsidised. We are providing protection because we believe it right to keep those two major sources of energy alive and flourishing and able to compete, in case we cannot do without them in the future.

The same must apply to energy efficiency. Even if it is cost effective, it still needs to be given a stronger market signal. The nuclear industry would die tomorrow without Government support and the coal industry would have dwindled long ago without it. Energy efficiency has been struggling along because it has not been accorded the same priority by the Government. We must rethink our strategy and give greater priority to the promotion of energy efficiency. The Minister will appreciate the analogy that it is rather like suggesting that the Treasury should maximise revenue by imposing more and more taxes without ever considering whether expenditure should be cut, thus making more revenue unnecessary. The Government's economic success and our prosperity during the last 10 years have been built on the opposite policy of cutting taxes because we have been able to reduce expenditure. We are providing the supply side of the energy equation with all the incentives, but we are not giving the same priority to the consumption side. If we realised how cost effective energy efficiency is and how well it could be promoted if we gave stronger market signals, my case would be accepted and adopted.

Even more serious than holding back the energy efficiency investment that we so desperately need and which a little more encouragement would provide is the disincentive to energy efficiency. What has happened to the neighbourhood energy action home insulation programme? It is dying on its feet, yet it was promoted by Ministers as the most cost-effective way in which to improve energy efficiency in low-income homes. There are other examples. Why are third-party financing arrangements for the public sector still so slow to get off the ground? Energy management companies that have offered to finance investment in the National Health Service on a shared energy basis have still not been given the go-ahead, even though they could save the taxpayer huge sums of money by reducing energy consumption, while reducing environmental pollution.

Another example is the Government's deliberate encouragement of the industry to waste energy through their decision to privatise British Gas. The Select Committee on Energy and the major energy users council have received evidence that the 25,000 therm cut-off point and the tariffs now applied by British Gas as a result of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report encourage consumers deliberately to waste gas. If a large commercial consumer uses just below 25,000 therms, it has to pay the domestic tariff, but if it wastes enough gas to use more than 25,000 therms its gas bill goes down although its energy consumption goes up. What is worse, firms that employed energy management consultants to reduce their consumption found that by reducing their consumption to below 25,000 therms they were increasing their energy bills because they had to pay the domestic tariff. That absurdity should be remedied; it is one specific example of how, far from promoting energy efficiency, we are encouraging energy waste.

I conclude with a note to the Government, and I hope that Opposition Members will shut their ears for a moment. I suggest to my right hon. and hon. Friends that green politics are here to stay and will intensify when scientists internationally persuade us that we have to take action on global warming. Green politics are not a protest vote, they are not relevant only to the United Kingdom, nor are green voters only *Guardian* readers. They are mostly articulate, well educated, informed, represent an ever-widening section of the public and are mostly Conservative supporters. If we are to remain in government, we have to respond more convincingly to those views or our opponents will take the initiative from us.

The rhetoric of improving energy efficiency and reducing fossil fuel consumption to reduce the greenhouse effect and global warming has to be accompanied by action. Government priorities and strategies for greater energy efficiency have to be adjusted. We should start next week by accepting the spirit of the Lords amendments to the Electricity Bill on energy efficiency and encouraging the promotion of combined heat and power which is a major way in which we can reduce fossil fuel burn and improve the efficiency of electricity production. We should make a start by accepting the arguments of the Select Committee on Energy over many years and in many reports that energy efficiency is cost effective, but needs a little more encouragement. In the next Session we should follow that up with an energy conservation Bill promoting what is cost effective to address environmental problems.

The Government should take the initiative positively to promote investment in energy efficiency because it will improve our productivity, reduce our energy bills and, above all, will give consumers stronger market signals to make the investments that the environment and our future survival will soon demand.

5.43 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak briefly in the debate on the Select Committee on Energy's report. I add my

voice to those who have paid tribute to the work of the Select Committee and its Chairman, the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd).

I should like to touch on one or two specific points, the first of which is the future of the Department of Energy to which the hon. Member for Havant referred. I represent Ross, Cromarty and Skye in the Scottish Highlands which is dependent for much of its economic well-being and activity on the health of the oil industry, not least the oil fabrication yards. The work force, and the people whose livelihoods depend on that work force, would view any thought, discussion or serious proposition that the Department of Energy should be wound up as extreme foolishness. It would be foolhardy indeed if we were to go down that track, despite the privatisations in the electricity industry which one can assume will be completed in the next few months. It is absolutely critical, and the report was correct to stress that we should maintain a Department of Energy into the future.

Turning to the oil fabrication sector, let me give the House one example of the dangers, or potential dangers, that confront the country and the oil industry. After 1992 and the Single European Act, it is extremely difficult to envisage how the Department of Energy will maintain the Offshore Supplies Office in its present form without its being counter to the provisions of the Single European Act. Yet time and again concern is expressed in the oil industry and the fabrication sector about unfair competition from other EC member states that are able to offer more advantageous power contracts or, through their system of local rating or local taxation, more advantageous property overheads for firms bidding for work against United Kingdom-based construction and fabrication companies. Therefore, there is a clear need to ensure as high a United Kingdom content as possible in the fabrication work carried out in domestic yards. Clearly, if the OSO cannot be maintained, a similar body would have a role to play.

A considerable worry is that Ministers acknowledge that it is likely that the OSO will run counter to the provisions of the Single European Act. They offer the industry a bland reassurance that some supervisory body or watchdog function will be maintained, but it has never been spelt out to those of us who are interested in what the Government propose to do in the next few years. I should be grateful if the Minister would pass my comments on to the Minister of State who takes specific responsibility for the oil sector, as there is growing concern about what will happen.

The problems that are fast approaching represent a strong argument, in addition to the many excellent arguments that the Chairman of the Select Committee set out, for maintaining a Department of Energy presence in the oil sector, and in all our energy reserves and production concerns.

I shall not follow in depth the excellent speech by the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) about energy conservation, but it is worth putting on record the points about energy efficiency which the Select Committee set out in very fine fashion in the report. The amount of waste in the economy caused by a lack of attention to or emphasis on energy efficiency is marked. The Energy Efficiency Office, having had its budget reduced from £24·5 million to £15 million, will not be as effective as it should be. Speaking in another place, Baroness Hooper said that the proposed reduction was a direct result of the successes achieved in the earlier campaign. Does that mean that the Department of Energy believes that the programme's work is complete? Baroness Hooper said that the Government will be "targeting our activities", but what does that mean? It is ill defined——

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Less money.

Mr. Kennedy: I agree with the hon. Gentleman.

Is energy efficiency still one of the Department's prime concerns? Government rhetoric about energy efficiency and the contribution that it can make to the economy and broader environment concerns is completely let down by the reality of the reduction in the budget for energy efficiency and conservation.

I was pleased that the Select Committee on Energy drew specific attention to research and development and industrial support. We have heard about the future of the coal industry, energy efficiency and the future of the Department. It is clear that within the evolving European Community and further afield, Britain will be left at the starting post if more is not done and more emphasis is not placed on industrial research and development and general support for the energy industry.

Welcome investment is being made in Britain, but all too often it is of an assembly nature and the conception, marketing and production is done in other countries, most notably Japan. In other sectors, conceptual work is done in Britain, but all too often, because of the lack of a coherent industrial strategy on research and development, manufacturing and production are located elsewhere in the European Community, frequently on other continents. That spells death for a nation that is seeking a long-term future but is an island economy. I was therefore pleased that the Select Committee's report drew attention specifically to the importance of research and development in energy. That point should be underscored.

I hope that the Government will offer an assurance, first and foremost from a local point of view, about the future of the Department of Energy and, more specifically, what will happen to the OSO as 1992 as the reality of the European single market approaches.

The report is timely and welcome in drawing attention to the importance of energy efficiency and a considerably enhanced role for research and development in this crucial sector of the British economy.

5.53 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): A number of hon. Members have supported the recommendations made in paragraphs 24 and 25 of the Select Committee's report. I did not share the views of the rest of the Committee. In the private deliberations that we held last week it was incumbent on me to explain why I differed from the rest of the Committee, so it is incumbent on me to explain why I sought to divide the Committee on the future of the Department of Energy and on another matter regarding the coal industry.

I commend the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd). He has done an excellent job over the years as Chairman of the Committee. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter). I disagreed profoundly with almost everything that he said, but he has a way of captivating the House and hon. Members enjoy listening to his speeches. I suspect that if

[Mr. Michael Brown]

I were to pick up on one or two of the points that he made I should be in danger of being out of order, as I was half an hour ago.

I did not agree with other members of the Select Committee that the Department of Energy should continue because I believed that the Committee's remit was to investigate the spending plans of the Department over the past year and for the ensuing summer. The decision about whether we have a Department of Trade, a Department of Industry, a Department of Trade and Industry, a Department of Health, a Department of Social Security, a Department of Health and Social Security or a green department with responsibilities that are currently held by the Department of the Environment—in my humble view it should share certain responsibilities with the Department of Energy—is not one for a Select Committee or the House. We all know that one person has always decided the formulation of Departments. We should do better to wait until that person has made his decision.

We have an excellent Secretary of State for Energy and team of Ministers, but they need not worry about any changes being made to the Department because none of them will be out of a job. However, those who are members of the Select Committee on Energy will be out of a job. If there is no Department of Energy, there is no Select Committee. If there is a good reason for retaining the Department of Energy, it is because members of the Committee will be able to retain their status and because I shall be able to continue to enjoy my weekly audience at the feet of the hon. Member for Hartlepool as we engage in the rough and tumble of lively debate, which I should certainly miss.

On page XV of the report, I proposed that the following words should be deleted:

"Furthermore, even at the risk of slightly affecting the value of the privatised companies at flotation"—

the electricity companies—

"we believe that the Government should make it plain to National Power, PowerGen and the Scottish electricity industry that the strategic national case for an indigenous coal industry means that they must pay what the SSEB described to us in 1987 as 'a modest premium' over international prices to ensure that British electricity supplies remain secure. BC should not be forced to reduce its prices to the lowest prices available on an unstable and unpredictable international market, however useful these prices may be to all concerned in the United Kingdom as an indicator of the energy costs of our competitors and hence the real cost of energy."

It was not in the interests of my constituents or of our economy to go along with that part of the paragraph. After a lively debate, I sought to divide the Committee. Although I lost the vote, I was grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) for taking the same view. It is absolutely essential that every pressure is put on the British coal industry to respond to competition because that is the only way to wean it off the unending subsidy which this report criticises.

Mr. Redmond: Will the hon. Gentleman expound his views on subsidised coal imported into this country, sometimes from countries where child labour is used in producing it? Does he want subsidised coal from various parts of the world to continue to be imported? Is he in favour of that unfair practice and of bumping the coal industry in that way?

Mr. Brown: Will you advise me, Madam Deputy Speaker, whether it would be in order for me to respond to that question? I am happy to respond, but I fear that the question goes wide of the terms of the debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): This is a reasonably wide debate which covers policy. If the hon. Member wishes to respond, he is at liberty to do so.

Mr. Brown: I shall respond most happily. I do not care who subsidises what, so long as it is not my constituents as British taxpayers. So long as the subsidies continue to come from my constituents and those of other hon. Members, I have a major objection to them. I have no views whatever on other countries subsidising their products and giving British consumers the opportunity of a better deal.

Mr. Redmond *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I shall gladly give way again in a moment. Any country that subsidises its industries will do as much harm to its economy as Government subsidies to our industries have done to our economy.

Mr. Redmond: The hon. Gentleman is right to worry about taxpayers footing the bills. Is he aware of the cost to his constituents, paid in tax, of subsidising the devastation brought about by his Government's policies?

Mr. Brown: I do not agree with that. The hon. Gentleman was not a Member of the House in the early 1980s when I represented the British Steel plant at Scunthorpe. You will recall, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I often sought to catch your predecessor's eye. During the first four years of my membership of the House, the BSC work force of 19,000 was reduced to 6,000 or 7,000. I never once suggested that taxpayers should subsidise my constituents and keep them in jobs producing a commodity that customers did not want to buy. On every occasion that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry came to the House to support Mr. Ian MacGregor, the chairman of the British Steel Corporation, I publicly gave my full support to their policies. I can report to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that as a result of the decisions taken in the early 1980s, supported by me, today the BSC does not ask the taxpayer for one ha'penny.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Rubbish.

Mr. Brown: It contributes as a taxpayer, paying corporation tax because it makes profits. It now manufactures a product which is sold because people want to buy it in preference to foreign steel. That is the position in which I want the coal industry to be.

I have been through what Opposition Members fear. In my constituency, 19,000 people worked in the steel industry one year and only 6,000 people four years later. I know that it is painful, but I ask the hon. Gentlemen to face that pain because the recovery afterwards is a joy to behold. I understand their legitimate concern for their miners and constituents, but it is misplaced. Those miners would be left on an unending diet of subsidies, and it is those subsidies that the report criticises.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The hon. Gentleman seems to forget that I, too, had a steelworks in my constituency where the work force was reduced from about 16,000 to about 6,000. I, too, went through the pain. I acknowledge that there is a difference between the histories of the steel and coal industries. If the hon. Gentleman will consider the history of coal rather than talk about market forces, he will realise how wrong he is.

Mr. Brown: I am not sure that the histories of those two great industries are so different. They were both starved of investment in the early part of this century and both were nationalised. One has been nationalised for 40 years and is in a worse state than the one which has been nationalised, thankfully, only for 20 years. There is a clear parallel between them.

I have explained to the House why I and my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East felt it necessary to divide the Committee on the paragraphs that I mentioned. I did not write them; they were presented to me for my approval, as was the rest of the report. It may be out of order to say this, but Back-Bench Members of Select Committees should have a greater opportunity to be involved in drafting reports before they are presented with them for final approval. That would help us when we consider Select Committee proceedings on estimates days and in other debates of this nature.

There is much in the report to commend it to Ministers. The detailed work of all involved provides food for thought which, I am sure, my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of Energy will consider carefully.

6.6 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) will understand why I do not follow him down that road. It is fortunate that the majority of the Select Committee Members rarely follow his suggestions.

The House will not be surprised if my speech mainly relates to the effect of the estimates on British Coal. Over many years the Select Committee has highlighted the problems that would face British Coal if the Government took certain actions. Unfortunately, the Government have rarely taken much notice of our reports. If they had taken notice of the 1987 report on coal and the report on electricity, they would not have taken the action that they did.

Three quarters of the money made available in the estimate through the vote is to assist British Coal. It is right and proper that a large slice of the report dwells on that industry. I am sure that the Chairman and members of the Select Committee will agree that it has not always been too impressed with the reliability of the estimates and the value to be placed on them. This year's estimates seem to have been treated with some scepticism for that reason.

Paragraph 5 of the report tells us that the uncertainties for British Coal are enormous. That is true. For many years it seems that we have never managed to get the Government to come clean. From time to time we have used our crystal ball and mostly the Select Committee and the House have been correct. The Government have ignored many of the Committee's recommendations and suggestions and on most occasions the Committee has been proved right.

We are aware that £250 million is a lot of money, but, as the Select Committee recognised, it is being used simply to run down the coal industry, as the Government have planned to do since 1984. The Government are on their way. We must ask, "Do we need a coal mining industry?" If the answer is yes, what size of industry is required? I should have thought that it should be the size required to meet the demand to generate energy and to mine for coal on these shores. It is obvious from the evidence to the Select Committee that that is not the Government's view.

Recently, in evidence to the Select Committee, Sir Peter Gregson made it clear that he expected the contract agreements between British Coal and the Central Electricity Generating Board to be completed in a few months' time. He said that his Department had been keeping in touch with developments. One can take that as one wants, but these decisions will be based purely and simply on conditions in the marketplace. The Government have had to provide £311 million in the estimates to bring about the loss of a further 15,000 jobs in the mining industry this financial year. The spin-off from the last financial year is about 5,000 jobs. This means, as Sir Peter Gregson told us, that by March next year the estimates will cover some 20,000 miners' jobs.

In 1987, the Select Committee suggested that there might be only 69,000 underground workers in the mining industry by 1990. The Government denied that. It is now obvious that by 1990 that number could fall to 50,000, which means that the mining communities will be in a more traumatic position than they have been in since 1984, when there were about 200,000 men on the colliery books. We have seen the industry run down rapidly. Although in the past there were tragic circumstances in many mining communities, at least the men over 50 were provided with a weekly income to cushion the blow. I have made these points several times in the House and in Committee and I do not apologise for repeating them. The 20,000 miners about whom we are talking in this financial year are not over 50; their average age is 34. They have no weekly income to cushion the blow. There is no alternative employment in the mining communities that these young men can take. There has been no action by the Government since 1984 to provide them with alternatives.

What is the Government's answer? What should these men do? What are the plans for them if 20,000 jobs are lost? It is not sufficient for the Government to argue that the coal industry must stand on its feet and fight the competition. If one accepts that—I never will—the Government have an obligation to the mining communities not to wipe them out for reasons of political dogma and to provide employment to take the place of the staple industries in these communities. There are no signs of that happening.

We hear about the marketplace. Does anyone, from the Secretary of State, to civil servants, to British Coal, believe that British coal can compete with coal from other countries? We hear about all the records and wonderful achievements since 1984. The majority of coal mines are making a working profit—£500 million in the last financial year. Through technology and the hard work of miners, these wonderful achievements have been made, which hon. Members on both sides of the House and Sir Robert Haslam praise. However, we can only produce coal for power stations at a price of £46 to £48 a tonne and it is possible to import coal for between £20 and £28 a tonne, because of subsidies and slave labour in other countries.

[Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse]

British coal will not be able to compete in the short term with coal from abroad. That is why the Select Committee decided that there should be some form of assistance to the coal industry and that the industry should not be left to the marketplace. Vast assistance will be given to the nuclear sector under privatisation, so why throw our industry to the wolves when everyone knows that it cannot compete? That is why some people, including the Government, have pushed hard to extend the ports at Immingham and elsewhere. They know that the negotiations between British Coal and the CEGB will result in contracts for 60 million tonnes of coal—10 million more tonnes of imports, resulting in the loss of miners' jobs.

Do we want to leave this country in a state where it cannot meet the demand of our power stations for coal because the industry has been so run down and we need more imports? Does anyone think that the prices of £20 and £28 a tonne for imported coal will be available then? No. Schoolchildren know that. We saw what happened during the oil crisis. It is crazy to do this. Without using my Yorkshire words, may I say that the Select Committee recognised that. Coal is the natural power we have available. If the Minister is in possession of the facts, will he tell us how many British pits, of those that are left, are really uneconomical? There may be a few, but if "uneconomical" means that they must produce coal at the marketplace figure for imports of £20 to £28 a tonne, every pit in this country must be uneconomical. If that is so, there is no great future for the mining industry, although we shall have serious need of that industry one day.

I have referred to figures in the past, and I will not bother the House with them tonight. It seems that some Conservative Members have no respect for the industry, and the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes seems to think that this argument is a big laugh. He should come to my constituency to see whether pit closures are a big laugh. He would see miners' estates, which some members of the Select Committee have seen. Half the estates are boarded up and those properties that are occupied house aged miners and the widows of miners. Shops and schools have been knocked down. The hon. Gentleman should look and decide whether the social consequences of the savage running down of the mining industry are a laughing matter. I assure the House that they are not.

The Select Committee expressed its concern that the Department's research and development expenditure is set to fall in real terms in 1989-90. As the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd), the Chairman of the Select Committee said earlier, it is essential that the Grimethorpe plant and others like it should be kept operating and that if there is a lack of private funds, the Government do not allow the Grimethorpe plant to close. We talk now about the greenhouse effect and carbon dioxide. That plant contributes to research into the greenhouse effect, which is one of this country's worst problems.

Last year, the Committee criticised the expenditure incurred by the Department of Energy when it moved to expensive headquarters on a prime London site. The Government have said that some of the major Departments should move out into the regions, so one cannot make a case for spending a colossal amount of money on a new building in London, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) said. I recall that the Committee suggested last year that it might be suitable to erect that building in an area such as Pontefract or Abertillery. I support the proposal for Pontefract or Castleford, but unfortunately that has not happened. A report today on the Property Services Agency main estimates showed the vast increase in costs of this new development and there should be some explanation for that.

I noticed that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes left the Chamber immediately after his speech. Unlike him, I believe that the Department of Energy has a continuing part to play, especially in view of our energy prospects. There is also a major part for the Select Committee on Energy to play, and I hope that the Government agree. I also hope that the Minister will give great consideration, when wiping out 20,000 mining jobs, to negotiations. Although nobody on the Government Front Bench appears to be listening, I will say to the Minister that his Department should negotiate with others to see what can be done to introduce alternative employment in the communities that will be wiped out, especially when one considers all the young men who will have no weekly income.

6.25 pm

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): I have followed the debate closely and I understand the strong plea made for the preservation of the Department of Energy. Many hon. Members may not be aware that the Department of Energy was a creation of the party of the present Government. Although the Department was defended in strong and strident terms, I have my doubts about the outcome. As we have said in previous debates, when the present Secretary of State took office, one of his terms of reference was to abolish the Department of Energy. I hope that the defence put up for the Department is listened to, but I have my doubts.

We have heard today about manpower in the coal industry. The House must be informed about how catastrophic the contraction of manpower in the coal industry has been. I recently had an exchange with the Under-Secretary of State for Energy on the figures and I was able to point out that, in the past seven or eight years, the coal industry has contracted by 151,000 or 152,000 men. It is the greatest contraction suffered by any industry in so short a period.

We are not talking about pits being closed because of dud technology, because they are using outdated technology, because there are no coal reserves left or because the manpower is aging. A young age group works in the coal industry at present. The average age is about 34 and the older men have left the industry. We do not close pits that have been exhausted; we close those that have great reserves of coal. When it was proposed to close Bilston Glen colliery in my constituency, I pointed out that that pit had hundreds of years of coal left. Even in Monktonhall, which has been mothballed, £30 million, £40 million or £50 million was spent in reaching coal reserves which would last for hundreds of years. In the Midlothian constituency, there is coal lasting for hundreds of years, yet it was decided to close those pits.

I want to give an example of the economic lunacy we practise and of the logic of bedlam. I was at a meeting with British Coal where we were having discussions with Mr. Moses, a director of British Coal. We were talking about

how a British pit could survive in the present economic and competitive climate. The general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers said that British Coal was telling us that a pit must produce coal at so much a gigajoule, although British Coal also said that it could not control the cost per gigajoule because factors in the market place determined that. We were told, for example, about the effects of rises in the value of the pound and about competitive bids from other countries. We asked whether Selby's closure would be considered if it did not live up to the gigajoule cost because of the balance of payments crisis and interest rates. Selby is the so-called jewel in the crown of the coal industry, but Mr. Moses' reply was, "Yes, we would have to consider it."

The Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy told us about the subsidy that the mining industry is receiving. I am not saying this in a spirit of cirticism, but if we are dealing with the costs of producing energy we must consider other arguments, such as the cost of nuclear power over the years. We must also consider the security of supply—which could be the subject of a valid debate in the House. I can best illustrate my argument with reference to the ridiculous position of the South of Scotland electricity board. The SSEB has gone back on previous understandings and agreements. It had previously said that we needed an indigenous coal industry. Indeed, the present chairman of the SSEB is on record as saying that it would be unthinkable if we did not have an indigenous coal industry in Scotland. He said that we would always need a coal industry in Scotland. However, he has changed his mind about that and is now putting forward similar arguments to those advanced by Conservative Members and is saying that the competitive argument must be considered. The chairman of the SSEB followed that competitive argument, despite the fact that the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Energy have been told that something had to be done because otherwise the coal industry in Scotland would contract to nothing.

The chairman of the SSEB went ahead with commercial considerations as the Government told him to do and did a deal for the importation of 1 million tonnes of Chinese coal. What about the argument for security of supply? The chairman of the SSEB said that that coal was cheaper. I am certain that it could not have been cheaper. Indeed, all the evidence and analyses are proving that it could not have been cheaper. Surely one cannot defend supplying our power stations with Chinese coal because by no stretch of the imagination could one say that that would give us security of supply. That is why I said that this policy is the height of lunacy.

I do not want to take up much more time because I want to leave the Minister time to respond to the debate. As a result of this debate, all the information that the Select Committee has given us and all the appraisals, I hope that we will agree that factors other than cost are involved. I hope that the Government will do something about the present uncertainty in the coal industry.

If we are to talk about blatant preference in our energy policy, the coal industry and the coal communities also have a right to express their blatant preference about the production of coal. We can still use the same argument on behalf of coal that was used 10, 20, 30 or even 40 years ago. We have coal in abundance. Therefore, we would be foolish as a country to contract our coal industry to such an extent that we would be dependent on imports of coal. I hope that we can get that message across in this debate to both the Government and the members of the Select Committee.

6.34 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I was glad that the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse), my colleague on the Select Committee, referred to vote 3 and the administrative costs of the Department of Energy. I am also pleased that almost a full ministerial team is now present because I believe that I speak for all members of the Select Committee in saying that we should like specific answers to the questions about the administrative costs and the location of the Department that we have raised in successive years in estimates debates.

We have questions about the expenditure incurred on the refurbishment of the offices of the Department of Energy. We are seriously concerned by the Department's apparent lack of consideration of the unanimous view of the Select Committee—again, expressed in two successive years—that the Department should seriously consider moving its staff from central London to other locations. Indeed, so irritated was the Select Committee by the unspecific and cursory response to last year's report that we described it in this year's report as "Civil-Service-speak for doing nothing". The Department is hardly paying even lip service to the Government's professed aim of decentralising staff from London.

The public will find it remarkable that a Department which is now spending £13 million on refurbishing its offices opposite Buckingham palace—at an actual cost that is about 280 per cent. above the original estimate—is not seriously considering whether it is possible to move most of its staff out of central London. I understand that the report of the Select Committee on the Environment today has expressed parallel concerns about the costs involved in refurbishing the offices of the Department of Energy.

Sir Gordon Menzie, the chief executive of the Property Services Agency, has described the £13 million expenditure —and the 280 per cent. increase over the original estimate —as an extremely good deal. If that cost escalation over a two-year period is an extremely good deal, one is tempted to ask what an extremely bad deal would be. If we take Sir Gordon Menzie at his word—and he is arguing that that expenditure is only half the standard commercial cost of office accommodation in central London— I expect that we are meant to believe that we are lucky that the expenditure on the refurbishment of the offices of the Department of Energy and its move to its new location opposite Buckingham palace has not amounted to £26 million. When is the Department seriously to consider moving its staff outside central London?

The public will be astonished that a Department with running costs that we have detailed in our Select Committee report as being over £30,000 per person this year, compared to the Welsh Office expenditure of just under £20,000 per person per year—just over one third less than the expenditure of the Department of Energy—is not seriously examining relocating its staff outside central London. In view of the fatuous explanations that we received both in oral examinations before the Select Committee and in written answers, the people of Scotland

[Mr. Alex Salmond]

will find it disgraceful that the oil division of the Department of Energy is not located where it belongs—north of the border.

On 26 June 1989, the Minister of State, Department of Energy referred in a written answer to the reason for the location of the oil division's staff in London, stating:

"Moreover the division is very much involved in providing advice to Ministers and has day-to-day discussions with the headquarters of the companies in the oil and gas industry, most of whom remain located in London."

That view was confirmed in oral evidence to the Select Committee by Sir Peter Gregson and others. It demonstrates a total lack of understanding about the causal relationship between the location of the Department of Energy and the location of the headquarters of the oil companies. The Department of Energy is in London because the oil companies are located in London. The simple fact is that the corporate headquarters of the international oil companies are located in London because the Department of Energy is located in London, with its key divisions of petroleum engineering and offshore licensing. The written answer also states:

"No specific discussions have been held with the companies on this issue."—[*Official Report*, 26 June 1989; Vol. 155, c. *359*.]

That is an interesting admission because less than two weeks ago I had discussions with a major international oil company which currently has its operational divisions in Aberdeen and its corporate headquarters in London. I asked its representatives directly and specifically what their response would be to the movement of the Department's petroleum engineering division and licensing staff north of the border to Scotland. The answer was quite specific: they would review the location of their corporate headquarters in London and would follow the Department's movement of staff.

The Select Committee would like a direct answer to our direct question: when will the Department give proper and serious examination to the question of relocation generally, and to the specific question of relocating the oil division north of the border?

Since the Select Committee made its recommendation on this point last year, we have gathered some interesting allies to our cause. I am thinking in particular of Professor Ross Harper, the president of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association, who has become a recent convert to the idea of moving the whole of the Department of Energy north of the border.

I do not want to be too rough on Professor Harper because in the past few days he has had some hard lessons on the reality of power politics between Edinburgh and London. No doubt some English Members have been following this interesting episode in Scottish politics. Professor Harper was the nominee or choice of the Secretary of State for Scotland for the post of chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland. Unfortunately for Professor Harper's ambitions, he ran into the Prime Minister's favourite son, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, who was appointed against the advice of the Secretary of State. Professor Harper has been learning some lessons about where the power lies in the Conservative party and where power lies in relations between Edinburgh and London.

It would be worthwhile for Professor Harper to examine why for the past 10 years there has been no move by the Department of Energy to locate oil staff north of the border. The only move in that direction was 15 years ago, when the Offshore Supplies Office was established in Glasgow as a direct result of political pressure from the Scottish National party at the time.

It would also do Professor Harper some good to look at the Select Committee's minutes of 25 January this year. On that day, I was engaged in discussion with the Secretary of State for Energy about a related matter—where it would be proper to locate the office of the Director General of Electricity Supply. I suggested that perhaps that office could be located in Scotland. The Secretary of State replied that that was "an eccentric notion". Perhaps Professor Harper should consider why the Secretary of State for Energy regards it as an eccentric notion to try to supervise the electricity industry of England and Wales from north of the border yet finds it entirely natural and normal that the direction and policy of the oil industry, which is located largely north of the border, should be run from London. That is a clear example of the hypocrisy and the fatuous reasoning that underlies the location decisions of the Department of Energy.

Those in the regions of England and in the nations of Scotland and Wales are of the opinion that it is high time that they ceased to subsidise the south-east of England through the concentration of Civil Service staff in London. That subsidy arises not just from the payment of Civil Service salaries and inner London weighting but from the whirlpool effect on the private sector and on private sector headquarters. This process of subsidy has ceased to be acceptable in the regions of England, and in Scotland and Wales.

The opinion in Scotland is that it is totally unacceptable that the oil divisions of the Department of Energy should continue to be located in London. That is not because we think that it is crucial that the 200 staff of the division should be located north of the border but because we recognise the thousands of jobs that would follow from the major oil companies if the Department made such a decision. It is not acceptable that the oil jobs concentrated in Scotland should be the jobs at the sharp end of the industry—the dirty, dangerous, offshore jobs. We are entitled to the policy jobs and the corporate headquarters employment now located in London which should be in Scotland.

Hon. Members have referred to the question of the continuation of the Department of Energy itself. The oil industry provides a neat illustration to show why it is by no means rational to say that because segments of the energy industry have been privatised we do not need a Department of Energy to overlay a policy. At present, no less than one third of the Department's total staff is employed on oil-related matters. For a number of years the oil industry has been largely in the private sector and it is now almost completely in that sector, yet the Government concede that there is still a need for a large proportion of the Department's staff to be devoted to that vital industry. Whether industry is in the public or the private sector, there remains a public policy requirement and a requirement for an energy strategy—something, of course, which this Government have manifestly failed to provide.

6.44 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): It is a great pleasure to be able to participate in this slightly unusual debate. By dint of these rather special circumstances Front Benchers have become Back Benchers and vice versa. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, are the fairy godmother. Your powers end at 7.26 pm, and we shall all revert to our normal status. Opposition and Government Front Bench spokesmen will not wind up the debate; that will be for the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) to do. It is a particular pleasure for me as a former member of the Select Committee to note that one glass slipper belongs to the hon. Member for Havant and the other to my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter). The Minister and I, on the other hand, are discussing this very important set of subjects as ordinary persons and with no kind of superior status.

I suppose that the most important question of all—it is the subject on which I propose to concentrate—is whether we need a Department of Energy and a Secretary of State for Energy. The former Member for Scunthorpe reinforced that point. The hon. Gentleman now represents the next-door constituency, whose name I temporarily forget——

Mr. Michael Brown: Let me help the hon. Gentleman. I represented Brigg and Scunthorpe from 1979 to 1983 and Brigg and Cleethorpes from 1983 to the present.

Mr. Morgan: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that characteristic intervention. At least we can have that right, if nothing else.

The key question is whether we need a Department of Energy, and that is dealt with under vote 3 in the Select Committee's report. It is uppermost in the minds of the Secretary of State and of civil servants in the Department as they contemplate their future, following what I understand is known in Harvard business school jargon as the endgame strategy that the Secretary of State is pursuing. Having privatised the pylons and other appurtenances of the electricity industry, the right hon. Gentleman can dispense with the Department and tell the Tory party conference about it, to rapturous applause. At that point, the right hon. Gentleman will presumably have had some form of promotion or will receive it shortly thereafter. That is known as following the principle, "privatise or perish". I do not think that I am attributing anything to the Secretary of State that he would not be happy to have attributed to him when I say that he must already have written his Tory party conference speech a thousand times in his head. He must have contemplated how wonderful it will be to refer to the notch on his belt once he has got rid of a large electricity supply industry and put it into the private sector. Having got rid of a large nationalised industry—perhaps the biggest—to the private sector, he can then justify the abolition of a Department of State.

This is a matter of interest to me not only as an ex-member of the Select Committee but as an ex-civil servant at the Department of Trade and Industry at a time when that Department still had responsibility for energy. I witnessed from inside the split up of the Department following OPEC's massive oil price rises in July 1973—from $2·50 a barrel to $10 a barrel—when energy was the word on everyone's lips. Superficially at any rate, there is a justification for saying that energy is no longer in crisis.

On a superficial level we may be justified in saying that we do not face that great financial cataclysm of the *Financial Times* index being as low as 146. It is about 2,000 now and that must warm the cockles of the hearts of some Conservative Members who have a direct interest in that sort of thing.

The western world has survived 13 years of high oil prices, and so there is a belief that we can, to use an apposite phrase, put the energy issue on the back burner. It is fair to say that the Secretary of State for Energy takes that view. For him the important thing is promotion and his next Tory party conference speech. However, the rest of the country is concerned about energy. After the legislation privatising the electricity supply industry is enacted, will there still be energy questions which require a separate Department of Energy? We may have said after the great oil price rises in 1973, "Nice one Faisal", but after the abolition of the Department of Energy, will we be happy to say, "Nice one Cecil"? Some of us believe that energy questions remain the same no matter how many nationalised industries fall within the purview of the Department and the Secretary of State for Energy.

It is fair to warn the Secretary of State for Energy that if he is pursuing an endgame strategy and wants to race to his promotion and get rid of the Department of Energy as a notch in his belt, he cannot blame other Secretaries of State such as the Secretary of State for the Environment for muscling into the energy question. He cannot even blame his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—another fairy godmother—if she and her colleagues refer to proposals for coal and carbon taxes at international conferences or in Tory party think-tank papers.

The Secretary of State appears to be asking whether we need a Department of Energy. Is it enough for the Secretary of State to say, as he appears to be saying now, "I will shovel all the shares in the electricity supply industry off the back of the lorry and then I will sell the lorry"? There is something extremely irresponsible about that view unless the Secretary of State can show that energy questions have become much less important than they were.

We are concerned about this because the Secretary of State is in a paradoxical position. He is trying to be the commandant of Colditz and the secretary of the escape committee at the same time. He cannot slide out of his responsibilities at the Department of Energy.

Important questions are covered by other votes that we have discussed tonight. Colóssal questions remain in relation to the remainder of the coal industry, although that is a much shrunken industry at the moment. How do we handle the question of the future of the British coal industry? What about the formulation of a policy for the industry? How can we make reasonable estimates for the coal industry? The Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy, the hon. Member for Havant, raised this matter earlier. Why do we go through this whole annual rigmarole of having two sets of estimates for the coal industry? The Department of Energy always underestimates the size of the restructuring grant and the time within which the industry will break even point. Perhaps the Department of Energy believes that that is the right way to provide incentives for the management and the men in the industry.

Mr. Allen McKay: Does my hon. Friend agree that the figure of £311 million represents about 15,000 redundancies? If there are 15,000 redundancies and the restructuring money has gone, will there be a new restructuring grant or will we depend on normal redundancies? The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) seemed to say that he did not care what other countries do to subsidise the products of this country provided that his constituents do not pay a subsidy. That appears to be a return to the old days of the empire when the country depended on the empire for subsidies.

Mr. Morgan: My hon. Friend has raised a very important point. Reading between the lines in the estimates it seems that we can calculate the number of impending redundancies, but the Minister refuses to confirm those figures in parliamentary questions. If the full story about the real number of possible redundancies for the following year was included in the estimates, that would frighten the life out of us. That is why the Minister does not do that. We need a Department of Energy to deal with such questions.

In addition to the coal industry, the Department of Energy must also consider energy conservation. We do not know the Department's policy on energy conservation. It has reduced expenditure on energy conservation, but it has not said that energy conservation is a less important issue. If we consider the Government's policy according to what is said rather than deeds, it would appear that energy conservation is, in the view of the Prime Minister and her Cabinet, the most important issue facing the planet. However, we are proposing to abolish the Department which should have the clear remit to formulate energy conservation policies.

We do not know the Department's policies on energy conservation. What are they? How much expenditure is involved? Where would the Department of Energy fit in with the other Departments and make a contribution, for example, with the Department of Education and Science, the Departments of Health and for Social Security—particularly if we are thinking about the implications of hypothermia? We must bear in mind that we have the worst record with regard to hypothermia in western Europe despite having one of the mildest climates. Those are huge issues which make a case for a separate Department to deal with energy matters.

Another important energy-related matter is the greenhouse effect. That is a top priority issue if we consider the Government's words and not their deeds. The hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) referred to the need for better technology with regard to energy conservation and efficiency, for example, in connection with combined heat and power and the insulation industries.

What about the relationship between privatisation and the nuclear industry rump which would remain in the private sector? We understand that even if the bulk of the electricity supply industry is privatised, some vehicle will have to be found to keep the risk part of the nuclear industry in the public sector by loading it into British Nuclear Fuels plc, which would remain under the wing of the Department of Energy instead of being privatised alongside the power stations. The dodgy part of the industry, the equivalent of the sewerage problem in water privatisation, will be kept in the public sector. The private sector will take the assets and profits and poor old Muggins—the British taxpayer—will continue to bear all the risks of unexpected rises, which we all know are expected rises, in the costs of nuclear waste disposal, reprocessing and power station decommissioning. The issues related to fairness, handling, monitoring and the estimating of BNFL's costs—as it will have to carry the risks on behalf of the taxpayer—require a separate fully-fledged Department of Energy.

In the end, we are not primarily concerned with how many nationalised industries come under the wing of the Department of Energy. Rather, we are concerned with the size of the energy questions that it must handle. We know that the price of energy has, in general, been falling since February 1986 in real terms. We have had three mild winters in succession and we do not hear weekly stories about pensioners freezing to death in their council flats as we heard during the harder winters of 1985 and 1986. That has tended to make Ministers believe that those issues are less important now.

If the Government try to proceed with the idea that they can get rid of the Department of Energy because they have disposed of its major, remaining nationalised industry, they would be very irresponsible, particularly when they are apparently now still thinking of trying to find a way of unloading the industry on to the private sector by guaranteeing or writing off the risks, debts and difficult parts of the electricity supply industry and keeping them with the taxpayer. That is the application of an old principle of Roman law called "nil prospectus desperandum"—in other words, "Do not do anything that frightens off the shareholders," or, "Let us leave something in it for the stags, otherwise it will not seem a popular privatisation."

If the taxpayer is to continue to carry the can for all the risks involved in the electricity supply industry after privatisation, he must have a proper, fully-fledged Department that can examine the big issues in the industry. Opposition Members do not want the Department to go out in a huge fireworks display involving the employment of expensive advisers and advertisers, and finally see the Secretary of State move on somewhere else, leaving all the problems to his successors.

7 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): I am not sure about the implication of the remarks of the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) about hon. Members speaking as private individuals. For my part, I will work on the assumption that, if I get it wrong, I will still be held to ransom by a wide audience and not only by the wonderful constituents of Worcestershire, South, whom I have the honour to represent.

I congratulate the Select Committee on Energy on yet another thorough report and on the way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) introduced it. With good reason, much of the debate has been about the coal industry. The first sentence of paragraph 4 of the report states:

> "The Vote for assistance to the coal industry takes up over three-quarters of the money which Parliament is asked to vote in support of the Department of Energy."

It has been quite apparent from debates in the House and in Committee that a variety of advice is coming forward to the Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) is right to say that the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) made an

impassioned and fluent speech. We seem to be throwing bouquets across the Chamber, but I must tell my hon. Friend that I disagreed with most of what the hon. Gentleman said. The hon. Gentleman characterised the position of British Coal as one of profitability, were it not for the fact that debt servicing, redundancy costs and one or two other things mean that so-called operating profits are turned into losses. He would not get away with that kind of statement in the private sector.

The fact is that, over the years, British Coal has accumulated losses of £2·5 billion, and the Government are coming before Parliament for supplementary estimates. I heard the criticisms that were made by my hon. Friend the Member for Havant. Next year we may have to ask for further grants to the industry. The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) asked about that point in the context of restructuring grant. British Coal's costs are still above those of international competitors. It is not sensible to ask whether British Coal is currently profitable and whether, with all these flush funds, it will now be able to do all sorts of exotic things that it would not be able to do without them.

The vital question that is being asked by many hon. Members is whether British Coal will be able to compete in the future. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes made an interesting intervention. The implication behind his views about the future pricing structure of British Coal is that British Coal can compete in the future. That lies at the root of what he said.

Mr. Leadbitter: The Minister was kind enough to refer to my interpretation of the operation and profitability of British Coal, bearing in mind inflation, high interest rates, changes in the market, oil prices, competition, and so on. He did not really accept my view. I took my information from a letter dated 6 February 1988 from the Secretary of State, which was sent to the Select Committee on Energy on that day for our consideration.

Mr. Spicer: Some people define profitability to encompass the idea of massive money still being spent on the industry. I have gone through the facts. The industry is costing the taxpayer a lot of money. I know that British Coal defines its present performance in terms of making operating profits. Strangely, as a Minister in the Department of Energy responsible for coal, among other things, I continue to find myself, in the context of this profitable industry, returning to the House and, in effect, begging the House for more money for that industry. Therefore, it is legitimate to ask whether the industry can compete in the future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Havant said that there is no way that coal can be mined at world prices. To some extent, that brings him into conflict with my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes. It is certainly not my view. As many hon. Members have stressed, there has been a massive improvement in the efficiency and productivity of the industry. There has been almost a 100 per cent. improvement in productivity in the past four or five years. There is no dispute about that.

The hon. Member for Hartlepool answered his own question about redundancies when he rightly said that there has been almost stable production over that period, with half as many men producing the same amount. That growth in productivity is not only something on which British Coal and those who work for it should be congratulated but is evidence that, if the process is continued, the industry will stand on its own feet, particularly when we bear in mind two additional factors. The first was mentioned by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) in a recent debate—the present difficulties in the world market. The Government accept that difficulties in the world market, perhaps leading to hardening prices, may exist if the electricity industry goes overboard with imports. There is a small world steam coal market because there are difficulties in the international trading of steam coal. That points to yet another intrinsic advantage—the infrastructure of a home-based coal industry. The Government take the view that, if we can continue the admirable process of improving the efficiency of the British coal industry, it can stand on its own feet and compete against foreigners.

I do not mean to quarrel with my hon. Friend the Member for Havant, as I agree with a lot of what he said. I agree that privatisation of the coal industry cannot guarantee its future, but a policy to privatise the industry is certainly a statement of the Government's faith in the future of the industry. Were the Government not to believe in the future of this industry, they could not properly embark on a policy of trying to sell it to the private sector. Coal is a perfect example of a Government who are backing an industry with massive amounts of money. Hon. Members will have heard Ministers say many times that we are spending £6·5 billion, £2 million every working day, of taxpayers' money on the industry. These are enormous sums of money, but the Government have also shown their faith in the future of the industry and in its ability to stand on its own two feet.

The second theme of this interesting and wide-ranging debate has been energy efficiency, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) referred in particular. The Government agree with him about building regulations, and amending building regulations will shortly be laid. As he said, this is an important part of any energy efficiency programme. I do not have time to go back over many of the detailed points that were made, but I shall make this point. Energy efficiency has been properly debated and no doubt will be debated again when the Electricity Bill returns to the House. The hon. Member for Cardiff, West nods his head, and I am not surprised that he will be raising this matter.

The Electricity Bill can be characterised in terms of an energy efficiency Bill. It is about efficiency in the production of energy. The whole purpose of the radical reform of the generating side of the electricity industry is to produce energy more efficiently. One of the results of that policy, which is a problem for the coal industry, is that in the production of more efficient energy gas-fired systems are coming forward. In their concentration on coal, the Opposition have to contend with the fact that, while Grimethorpe may produce some wonderful answers, the maximum saving of CO_2 suggested for the topping cycle at Grimethorpe is between 15 and 20 per cent. In terms of gas over coal-fired stations, the figure would be nearer 40 per cent. We cannot just discard these points when discussing energy efficiency. Nor can we discard the fact that, under a privatised and much freer system, which will exist after the Electricity Bill becomes law, energy efficient production systems will be forthcoming. That needs to be stated, because it seems to have been forgotten that it is critical to our policy.

[Mr. Spicer]

If that were not accepted by the Opposition—and they have an interest in not accepting that our Bill will produce greater efficiencies in the production of energy—they have only to look at the wording of the Bill. If, for instance, they wish to concentrate on whether energy will be used more efficiently, which is the other side of the coin from the production side, then they will be pleased to see that, for the first time, the regulator will have a statutory duty to promote the more efficient use of energy.

Mr. Morgan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Spicer: I shall give way in a moment, when I have finished this point. It may be on this that the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene. I have heard arguments that that duty of the regulator under the Electricity Bill should be further strengthened. We are listening to those arguments. However, I want to make it clear that, for the first time, if Parliament accepts the Electricity Bill, there will be a statutory requirement on a public body to insist on the promotion of the better use of energy.

Mr. Morgan: I am sorry to disappoint the Minister, but that was not the point I was going to make as it will come up next week. The point I shall make has come up before, and we have not yet had a satisfactory answer. The Minister has the simple-minded, free-market belief that all the provisions to free the electricity supply industry are bound to mean more efficient manufacture of electricity, or there will be no new entrants. Therefore, can he tell us whether there will be any new entrants into electricity generation who will not be doing it simply on take-or-pay contracts, negotiated beforehand so that nobody will know at the point of starting construction whether they will be more efficient?

Mr. Spicer: Although perhaps, unlike the hon. Member, I do not have a crystal ball, I can say that the circumstances will be such that new entrants can come in. A particular point is the removal of the control of the wires, or the distribution system, from the generators. At the moment, that is not the situation. The major generator, or monopoly generator, controls the wires. The playing field will be set on an even basis for new entrants. We have been given signs that there will be many new entrants into the system.

Mr. Morgan: On a pay-or-take basis?

Mr. Spicer: The exact basis on which they finally come in, and the contracts that they strike, will be a matter for them.

A running theme in the debate is the location and cost of offices. The lease of the offices of the Department of Energy at Millbank ran out in 1982, so that this problem has been with us for some time. Decisions were made in the early 1980s not to move policy-making parts of the Department out of London. To quote the Energy Committee back to itself, it said in another context:

"This is not the right time to move energy policy away from centre stage."

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West spoke at length about whether the Department of Energy should be amalgamated with another Department, but that is not a matter for the Department to determine, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes said. Whether or not it is, a certain number of policy advisers will need to be based in the capital. For instance, some must be ready to assist in the process of reporting to Parliament—which, as far as I understand it, plans to stay in the capital.

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Spicer: I thought I might prompt the hon. Gentleman to rise to his feet. I have only three or four minutes and the hon. Gentleman has made his point. The House has heard him, and I must carry on.

For many years, some of the key operational personnel in the Department of Energy have worked outside London. For example, the Offshore Supplies Office works out of Glasgow and Aberdeen, the energy efficiency regional offices are spread throughout the country, as are the electricity meter examining service personnel. We were the first Department to set up a typing pool outside London, in Lytham St. Anne's, and it still exists. However, it has been clear for some time that the major policy-making functions of the Department would need to continue to exist in London.

It is worth stressing that the Department of Energy is a small Department, with only about 1,000 employees. Therefore, the real question is more about how the functions should be located in London. Some 13 options were considered. The major criterion was that the offices needed to be reasonably close to Parliament so that Ministers and officials could get backwards and forwards to Parliament with relative ease. I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Minister of State agrees with me, but I think that negotiating Parliament square from the top of Victoria street, when on a three-line Whip, will not be as easy as coming down the Embankment from Millbank, but one cannot have everything.

The costs of rent and refurbishment have risen. The latter, as the Committee noted, is mainly a matter for the Property Services Agency, which is part of the Department of the Environment. In the context of what has been said about energy efficiency, I should put it on record that we shall be moving from what must be one of the least energy efficient buildings in London to one that will incorporate state-of-the-art technology for maximising the efficient use of energy, and will be something of a show case.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Spicer: No, I will not give way as I do not have time.

The notional rent paid by the Department to the PSA, another branch of Government, will be high because it will reflect market rents, which are high in that part of London. The actual rent paid by the PSA, which negotiated favourable terms with the developers, is about half the current market costs in that part of London. That means that the offices will be an extremely good deal for the taxpayer, although the policy of charging opportunity costs to Departments will mean that the Department of Energy's vote incorporates the full market rent.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Spicer: I am sorry, but I am not giving way as I must give my hon. Friend the Member for Havant time to reply.

I have been asked what our energy policy is, and I shall give the House the benefit of it. Before I do so, however, I believe that we are entitled to ask the Opposition what

are their energy policies. A policy that relies on conservation, the abolition of nuclear power and a cut in CO_2 from coal all in one breath is likely to lead, at the very best, to the statutory wearing of thermal underwear. It certainly would not produce sufficient energy to satisfy our nation's needs.

Our energy strategy is extremely clear and it comprises several simple principles. First, customers should be free to choose the energy they want and should do so from a multiplicity of energy sources—coal, nuclear, renewables, oil and gas. Secondly, energy must be supplied as cheaply and efficiently as possible. Thirdly, to that end, we should ensure that those who work in the industry are well motivated and, as far as possible, shareholders in the privatised companies. Fourthly, we want to make an important distinction between the regulatory bodies and the operators. The regulators of safety, the environment and competition should remain in the public sector. Decisions about investment, capital allocation and management should be put in private hands.

"I should have liked to consider the many other interesting and important questions that have been raised, but at this point I will give my hon. Friend the Member for Havant the opportunity to reply.

7.22 pm

Sir Ian Lloyd: With the leave of the House, I shall give a few broad conclusions to the debate.

I appreciate the wide-ranging reassurances that my hon. Friend the Minister has given. He has opened up a number of areas for debate and it is a great pity that we do not have a couple of extra hours in which to explore those important questions.

The hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) has been one of the most assiduous and persistant gladiators in our Committee for a considerable time. He said that a miner was a very special kind of man. I am sure that the whole House believes that to be true. My hope, as I expressed it once to Joe Gormley, is that the day will dawn, perhaps after Fleischmann and Pons have got it right, when human beings do not have to spend their working lives several thousand feet underground. Until then, however—that goal may be half a century away—the balance between miners' skills and the rewards that society offers must be reasonable, defensible and sustainable. Those words cannot have either a constant meaning or quantum.

My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) concentrated with great skill, as he usually does, on energy efficiency. He referred in an anticipatory sense to global warming. We are faced with the problem of global warming and the immense problems that that creates versus global stupidity, global self-interest and global nationalism. My hon. Friend also referred to green politics and said that they were here to stay. I believe that the major parties are more likely to accommodate the green criteria than the Greens are likely to develop coherent economic, defence, social, energy and health policies.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) concentrated on support for the Department of Energy and I am glad to have his support on that point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) disagreed in his usual courteous way with the Committee's view on the future of the Department of Energy. He said that only one person will decide that particular question and I entirely agree with him. We all know who that one person is. The decision is of such immense importance, however, that the nation is entitled to debate the merits of the issue whatever my right hon. Friend's final judgment may be. I have the greatest confidence in that judgment and I believe that it will be used at the right time in the right way.

The hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) made a most interesting speech in which he said that the future size of the coal industry must be determined by demand. I believe that there is a great distinction between whether demand is the determinant of the future size of the coal industry or a determinant. Never have greater issues turned on the fundamental difference between those two little words, "the" and "a".

The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) also concentrated on the contraction of the coal industry. He rightly referred to the young industry, but he also talked about collieries with hundreds of years of reserves being closed. I have no doubt that that is so, but it always raises questions as to how deep one should mine and at what cost. What are the geological problems? Are the seams faulted? I do not believe that one can dismiss such questions simply because it is desirable for social and many other reasons to maintain particular collieries in particular places.

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings.*

The Question necessary to dispose of the proceedings was deferred, pursuant to paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates).

ESTIMATES 1989-90

Class VI, Vote 3

Department of Transport

[Relevant document: First Report from the Transport Committee of Session 1988-89 on Air Traffic Control Safety (House of Commons Paper No. 198) and the Third Special Report: Government Observations on the First Report (House of Commons Paper No. 407)]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a further sum, not exceeding £156,213,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1990 for expenditure by the Department of Transport on assistance to shipping; civil aviation; central administration; certain licensing and testing schemes; research and development; road safety and certain other transport services; including civil defence, grants in aid, international subscriptions, and residual expenses associated with the privatisation of transport industries.—*[Mr. Peter Bottomley.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I remind the House that under the resolution of the House on 27 June this estimate is to be considered so far as it relates to civil aviation services.

7.26 pm

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Select Committee inquiries are often topical at the time when the Committee agrees to carry out an inquiry. However, when the final report is presented to the House the passage of events and of time have usually made the report of little public interest. That is not the case in relation to the report of the Transport Select Committee on air traffic control safety and runway capacity and the Government's response to it.

Our report is even more topical and of greater public interest now than the subject was some 17 months ago in February 1988 when we agreed to conduct our inquiry. We began our inquiry at a time of increasing public concern about the safety of the skies over the United Kingdom following a number of air misses. It quickly became a time of increasing public annoyance at airport congestion, delays to summer holidays and so on.

Now the situation has deteriorated to such an extent that almost all air travellers experience delays at some time, regardless of the month in which they travel. Those of us who travel weekly, and often wearily, are too well aware of the situation which, sadly, I fear will only get worse in the next five years before it starts to get better, if it ever does. I wrote most of my remarks for tonight's debate to pass my time during an air traffic control delay between Glasgow and London today.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The hon. Gentleman is probably aware that Edinburgh was also affected by similar delays. The 12.40 British Midland flight finally took off at 3.40, three hours late.

Mr. Marshall: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has made it in time to participate in this debate.

I have already referred to air misses or near misses. Perhaps "air hits" or "near hits" would be more appropriate descriptions. I must stress, however, that Britain has an excellent record of air traffic control safety and that reflects great credit on everyone concerned. I also stress that our inquiry revealed no concrete evidence to suggest that safety was definitely at risk. However, no one can guarantee 100 per cent. safety, 100 per cent. of the time. With ever-increasing demand, pressures on staff, shortages and general all-round pressures, there is always the possibility of an accident occurring. I certainly hope that one does not happen and, if our report goes some way towards preventing any such accident, it will have been well worth while.

This was the Committee's major inquiry during 1988. I am grateful to the Liaison Committee for recommending this estimate for debate today. I am also extremely grateful to the other 10 members, of all parties, of the Select Committee on Transport for the hard work which they put into the compilation of the report and also to the Committee staff for their efforts on our behalf. I should also like to thank our two specialist advisers, Mr. Bill Woodruff, the former group director and controller of National Air Traffic Services, and Mr. David Learmount, the transport editor of *Flight International*. Thanks are also due to the 11 groups of witnesses who gave oral evidence to the Committee and the 72 individuals and organisations who submitted written memoranda on the subject to the Committee. Those included my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). Our report is published in three volumes and contains 283 pages of evidence, 105 pages of appendices and 47 recommendations from the Committee which were agreed to by all parties represented on the Committee.

No one disputes that transport in Britain is in a mess. Congested airports, overcrowded trains and tubes, motorway tailbacks for miles and traffic jams on all main roads are commonplace. That is hardly surprising in view of almost 10 years of Government neglect in failing to provide adequate infrastructure or to take proper cognisance of the fact that transport policy involves public safety, along with a prolonged ability by almost everyone involved to underestimate the demand for all modes of travel. The present Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), inherited this bed of nails.

I have the highest regard for the right hon. Gentleman who is the first Secretary of State for Transport in my 10 years in the House to take a genuine interest in transport. Perhaps these kind words will be the kiss of death for him, but I sincerely hope not. However, although he may care deeply about transport and has developed a good working relationship with the Select Committee, which its members appreciate, I cannot agree with or understand many of his decisions, or non-decisions, on transport policies.

The Secretary of State is still not making the right decisions about the nation's transportation needs, or making them fast enough, as our report will show. I had hoped that the Secretary of State would be present to participate in this debate. Unfortunately, he is not here. I understand that the Minister for Roads and Traffic will participate. However, while he will do his best, it will still be only second best, which is typical of the Government's attitude to transport.

Unfortunately, this debate is not about all aspects of transport, but only about the narrow although vital matter of air traffic control safety. However, there is enough evidence in the report to bear out what I have said. No doubt many hon. Members from both sides of the House will pick up many points from the report, as well as

making specific remarks about their own localities. I shall concentrate on a few main general points of interest as well as those of interest in Scotland.

In his press release of 15 June, announcing the Government's response to the report, the Secretary of State said that several of the Committee's recommendations corresponded to measures that had already been implemented during the past year. I should like to think that the Committee's deliberations had provided a useful forum for discussion of the issues and been of some use in guiding the Department and the Civil Aviation Authority in their response to the problems of air traffic control as they developed. That is perhaps one of the best and most important roles performed by Select Committees.

The Secretary of State went on to say that he and the Civil Aviation Authority broadly accepted the analysis and agreed with the majority of the Committee's recommendations. I welcome that statement and compliment the Secretary of State on his actions. However, the recommendations not accepted, or continued for further consideration, are those which, perhaps, give greatest cause for concern.

In some of his responses, the Secretary of State appears to accept the 1985 White Paper on airports policy as the be-all and end-all of aviation policy. But it is now four years or more out of date. Since then, the aviation world has moved ahead at a rate that no one forecast or anticipated. The right hon. Gentleman should immediately commission a review and an update of the 1985 White Paper. A 1990 White Paper would come to different conclusions.

Our report contains bad news and good news. The bad news relates to the history of air traffic control since 1975. The good news involves what is being done, and will be done, to deal with the issue, even if those actions are being taken five years or more too late. Sadly, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which produced a report on national air traffic services in 1983, noted that the CAA had sought a 15 per cent. cut in manpower between the years 1975 and 1977, and that this had been achieved, although over a longer period. After 1982, there was increased pressure from the Department and the CAA to find further ways of saving manpower and the then five-year corporate plan contained a target reduction in staff of 7·4 per cent.

It seemed to us that little or no account was taken over the years of the possible need for additional and increasing commitments or of the certainty of increasing traffic. In addition, account was not taken of the need for more air traffic control staff to deal with the planning of new systems and developments or of the need to allow for the considerable time that elapses between recruitment and the operational availability of air traffic controllers. The Civil Aviation Authority, under pressure from the Department, continued to seek ways of cutting staff levels and, it appeared to us, adopted recruiting targets on the basis of over-optimistic assumptions about what was practical.

The chairman of the CAA admitted that, with the benefit of hindsight,

"reductions were carried too far"

and that

"the whole thrust of the MMC investigation as late as 1983 was down that road."

The Institution of Professional Civil Servants noted that only three years ago, in 1986, the Civil Aviation Authority stated that it had a surplus of at least 135 air traffic controllers and that early retirement had been proposed to reduce the surplus. Not surprisingly, that led the IPCS to express a lack of confidence in the CAA and its forecasting abilities. With such a history of lack of foresight and undue pressure for reductions in staff levels, it is hardly surprising that there is now a serious shortage of air traffic controllers in this country.

Happily, the Civil Aviation Authority has begun to put its house in order. I believe that the chairman of the CAA, Christopher Tugendhat, is determined to make great improvements. However, that will take time and it will be at least five or six years before everything is completed. I am grateful to him for sending me a copy of his news release of 5 July, detailing 24 points regarding his £600 million investment programme for the next 10 years.

Recommendations 10 and 26 in our report refer to the need for crucial decisions to be made about future runway capacity, especially in the south-east, and add that, despite everything, a second runway should be provided at Gatwick. I accept that there is unlikely to be a second runway at Gatwick, but there should be. The world's airlines estimate that demand for air travel will grow two and a half times between 1989 and 2005. It does not take a genius to realise that more than a fair share of that increase will take place in the south-east of England or to forecast that Heathrow, Gatwick, and even Stansted, will have reached saturation long before the year 2000.

If there is to be no second runway at Gatwick—and it is almost 1990—and as it takes, on average, 12 years from the date of decision to complete a new runway, there will be no new runway in the south-east of England to meet the demand by the year 2000 unless someone somewhere gets his finger out now. I have been told that the cost to airlines of a one-minute delay for a 757 aircraft is £150 and for a 747 aircraft it is £900. If those figures are correct, they are staggering and who knows what the annual cost could be, based on the delays that occur?

We are only too well aware of the problems of congestion and of the massive additional costs that it imposes on airlines, business and industry. It causes extreme annoyance, upset and even heartbreak to passengers. We really need national, European and international aviation policies that will meet the needs of passengers and of safety, not those of vested interests. Speaking of vested interests, the British Airports Authority has been criticised by some Conservative Members on the Committee for acting as a private monopoly and for being more concerned with selling franchises in airports and with increasing profits at the expense of airport users than with furthering the wider interests of British aviation. Perhaps a return to the public sector or the breaking up of its monopoly might find all-party agreement.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Surely one of the reasons why the British Airports Authority has successfully branched out into spheres of activity other than providing services for air travellers is that it operates on a price control of RPI minus 7 per cent. Perhaps we should re-examine that formula; if we give the authority more scope for making more money out of providing the services that it should provide, on which it lost £15 million last year, while making a total profit of £198 million overall it might switch its attention to providing the sort of services that we want it to provide.

Mr. Marshall: The profits just announced by the BAA seem to show general agreement with the points I have made about it. It certainly operates different charging policies at different airports. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will have a chance to say something in support of the BAA later on.

An example of BAA's possible inadequacy relates to new runways and traffic forecasts. Its forecast for growth in traffic is based on an annual average growth rate of 4·5 per cent. for passengers and 2 per cent. for air transport movements. The figures are necessarily speculative, but the Civil Aviation Authority puts the annual growth rate for air transport movements at 2·5 per cent. Although there would appear to be little difference between the two bodies' estimates, the CAA figures clearly show the need for a new runway at the turn of the century. The BAA places undue reliance on the expectation that passengers will travel on larger aircraft. That is the point that it put to us, but the figures do not bear it out.

Over the past 10 years the average number of passengers per aircraft at Heathrow has increased by only 11 per cent., whereas passenger growth in the same period has been 34 per cent. The BAA appears to think that London's existing airports will be able to cope until after the turn of the century, but it is alone in that view, and alone in assuming that a new runway can be conceived, planned and built in less than 10 years.

We heard none of the necessary urgency from Sir Norman Payne or his officials when they appeared before us. I find it hard to understand their attitude unless it is entirely influenced by their desire to develop Stansted more quickly than originally envisaged.

The Secretary of State should go all out to encourage much greater use of regional airports such as Birmingham and Glasgow for international and intercontinental flights. That would help to reduce some of the pressure on the south-east, as recommendation 23 of the report suggests——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Marshall: I shall give way in a moment; I think that my hon. Friend is prejudging what I am about to say.

The decision not to grant gateway status to Glasgow airport and allow transatlantic and intercontinental flights from Abbotsinch is disgraceful. Almost everyone in Scotland wants gateway status for Glasgow and even, perhaps, for Edinburgh. I shall mention only the CBI, the Glasgow chamber of commerce, Glasgow district council——

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Marshall: I shall give way in a minute. Many more jobs could be created if Glasgow were given gateway status. A number of British, European and American airlines would operate new services and Glasgow would become a minihub providing better services to more destinations for the people of Scotland. I hope that that would also end the scandalous surcharges that holiday companies extort from tourists who have to travel to the south and go on holiday.

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend is talking a load of rubbish. First, he mixed up transatlantic flights and European holiday flights. No one denies that Glasgow airport should have more direct flights to Europe and more European holiday flights, but it should not take away the transatlantic flights which sustain Prestwick airport. That would be the death knell of Prestwick, and Glasgow does not have the runway capacity or terminal and ground facilities to deal with such traffic.

My hon. Friend is wrong to say that opinion in Scotland supports Glasgow airport's bid for transatlantic status. The Scottish Trades Union Congress and the Scottish council of the Labour party, with which my hon. Friend is not unconnected, have made it clear, as have many other bodies, including district councils, Strathclyde regional council and others, that they want Prestwick to remain as Scotland's transatlantic gateway, prospering in association with Glasgow airport in a joint role. I hope that my hon. Friend recognises that and will think again.

Mr. Marshall: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's speech, but he has not got it right. He has allowed his blinkers to conceal the right path from him. Apart from Ayrshire Members of all parties and the Secretary of State for Scotland, very few people in Scotland believe that Glasgow, and perhaps even Edinburgh, should not have gateway status.

Mr. Foulkes: I do not know whether my hon. Friend realises that Sir Norman Payne convened a meeting which 25 Scottish Members of all four parties representing Scotland attended. No one spoke against Prestwick having sole transatlantic status; all speeches were in favour. That proves my hon. Friend entirely wrong.

Mr. Marshall: I, in turn, draw my hon. Friend's attention to the poll of all 72 Scottish Members carried out recently by the *Daily Record*. It gave the opposite point of view, and it was the first time Members had been asked to state whether they were in favour of gateway status for Glasgow airport. Our hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) attended the meeting with the BAA a fortnight ago, when we were told that the new generation of aircraft would have no difficulty flying from Glasgow to the west coast of the United States. It is not true that Glasgow is unsuitable for transatlantic flights: it is perfectly suitable.

Glasgow will never be a hub to rival Heathrow, Gatwick or even Manchester, but if it does not get gateway status Manchester will become Scotland's gateway airport. All the additional expense of the road and rail links mooted for Prestwick, which are admirable for the infrastructure for the west of Scotland, will not generate enough additional passengers ever to make Prestwick a hub. To give Glasgow gateway status would not mean the death of Prestwick, as my hon. Friend suggests. Prestwick is an excellent airport with excellent facilities and staff and it will always have a future. About 4,500 jobs are located there—with British Aerospace, the Ministry of Defence and Caledonian Air Motive, and new developments are announced every week. About 250 people are employed——

Mr. Foulkes: Is my hon. Friend not aware that four major announcements have been made—one by the CAA, one by British Aerospace, a third by Caledonian Air Motive and the last by TNT (UK) Ltd? All four decisions follow the wise decision by the Secretary of State for Transport—I never thought I would say that—to maintain Prestwick's sole transatlantic status. The decisions follow

that decision and depend on it to a large extent. If the Secretary of State had taken my hon. Friend's advice, these welcome decisions might not have been taken.

Mr. Marshall: I am touched by the unholy alliance between my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), the Secretary of State for Defence, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Transport. We are considering what is in the best interests of Scotland's aviation future, and that has to be gateway status for Glasgow. I hope that the Secretary of State for Transport will reconsider his decision and in the fullness of time will change his mind. At the end of the day it is Glasgow's future that matters and the decision is a bad one for Scotland's future in transport.

On another Scottish issue, the Civil Aviation Authority has an initiative to pinpoint flight delays and airline punctuality at selected British airports and publish the figures monthly. Six airports—Birmingham, Gatwick, Heathrow, Luton, Manchester and Stansted—have been chosen, but not a single Scottish airport is on the list. Why is that, bearing in mind that Anglo-Scottish shuttle flights are arguably the busiest domestic services in the United Kingdom? It is still not too late to include Scotland in this initiative and the Secretary of State or the chairman of the CAA should do so as soon as possible.

I am pleased to see that in the response to recommendation (xxxii) National Air Traffic Services is studying the feasibility of a new east coast airway between Newcastle and Clacton. That is urgently needed to relieve some of the pressure on the overcrowded Daventry airway. I should like to see a decrease in the amount of air space reserved exclusively for military use. I would welcome an early announcement on recommendation (xxxviii). That recommendation states that a location for the new London air traffic control centre should be decided upon "without further delay" if it is to be operational by 1996. That is crucial to the whole strategy for the future. When and where is it to be built? Perhaps the Minister will give us some information about that.

I shall now turn to a major recommendation, at least in the areas of organisation and administration. It is the recommendation that the Government examine the possibility of splitting the CAA into two separate self-standing organisations. The CAA would retain all its regulatory functions while NATS would be established as a separate public sector body. I thought that the Department would reject that recommendation out of hand. The House can imagine my surprise at reading the Government's response which states:

"This is an important recommendation which requires thorough consideration. The Government will respond in due course."

Unfortunately, I do not think that that shows a willingness to accept our recommendation. I suspect that it is a hint that the Government have the CAA on their list of targets for privatisation. Perhaps the Minister could clarify the matter.

On Eurocontrol the Government's response to recommendation (xxxi) is encouraging. I hope that they and the CAA will pursue the matter with the utmost vigour as they say they will. A large part of the problem is in Europe which is comparable in size and population with the United States of America where the Federal Aviation Authority standardises equipment and procedures for the whole of the United States. We need and must eventually achieve a similar set-up in Europe. We need a central European system of air traffic control covering all 22 European countries and not just the EC countries. Eurocontrol must become a reality whether one or two of our leaders like it or not.

If our Select Committee inquiry and report have gone even a little way towards making the skies above our country a bit safer, they will have been well worth while.

7.52 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) and his Committee on their most excellent first report on air traffic control safety. The Committee interviewed an impressive list of experts in the field and the numerous memoranda submitted to the Committee make interesting reading.

We address this subject at a time when a great deal is happening in air transport. We are seeing rapid technological and commercial change. The legal and institutional frameworks are being transformed and the European Community is in the process of getting a single European market in air transport as in other sectors. We have recently had the first measure of liberalisation in Europe which enables small aircraft to fly between regional airports. Another measure is due in 1990. If the internal market in air transport is to be achieved by the target date of 1 January 1993 there must be substantial advance in the next stage of liberalisation that we will see in June 1990. It is within the context of those changes that we are addressing the recommendations of the Committee.

I suggest that the measures that we want adopted in the next stage of liberalisation should include, first, the freedom for airlines to set their own fares, subject only to safeguards against anti-competitive practices. Secondly, we need the opening of all routes between member states and, thirdly, the removal of capacity constraints on services between member states. Fourthly, existing limits on multiple designation should be removed and, fifthly, we need further liberalisation of passenger services. Sixthly, we need the full liberalisation of all cargo services. Seventhly, we want to see endorsed the effectiveness of competition rules by a review of block exemption regulations. Lastly, we must have equality of opportunity between member states, and that must be safeguarded by uniform criteria throughout the Community for route licensing and effective control of state aid to airlines.

Within a liberalised Europe we must have a level playing field, and at the moment too many of our partners in Europe profess to think towards liberalisation while practising state control and assistance against countries such as the United Kingdom where domestic liberalisation has already occurred to a large extent and where the industry is based on free enterprise operating in a free market.

I should like to highlight some of the changes which are currently seen in civil aviation and which are important to bear in mind when considering these recommendations. First, there is strong pressure on airlines, and on those companies and organisations that provide services for airlines, to increase efficiency and to lower costs. We are beginning to see new route planning, operational methods and market domination through the hubs. We are also beginning to see the concentration of market power in the hands of a few very large carriers. That is happening in the

[Mr. Michael Colvin]

United States of America where the six biggest carriers operate more than 50 per cent. of the services. That could happen in Europe through mergers and acquisitions, some of which cross frontiers. We have seen the recent British Airways arrangements with Sabena and perhaps the Select Committee on Transport would like to address that issue next.

We are beginning to see increasing control of feeder operations by the major carriers and increased air space and airport congestion and additional problems about the availability of slots at airports. The circumstances in which the Select Committee looks at those difficulties are trying and the problems are difficult to resolve.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I am trying hard to follow the hon. Gentleman's argument. Does he agree that the matters that he has listed are the result of deregulation, especially in America? Is that not what capitalism is about? What does he object to if on the one hand he says he wants further liberalisation while on the other hand he says that if this happens the largest and strongest will take the best of the market? I am not quite clear about that.

Mr. Colvin: It is difficult to explain, but there is a fundamental difference between liberalisation and total deregulation. In the United States the industry was totally deregulated and that created a free-for-all. One of the experts on the subject is Mr. Michael Levine who is well known to those with an interest in civil aviation. He dreamed up the whole concept of deregulation in the United States and Mr. Alfred Kahn administered it on behalf of President Carter when he was elected. It has not worked out as anticipated by the gurus who dreamed it up. If we had asked them, way back, to use their crystal ball, they would never have envisaged that the industry in the United States would have its present structure.

We want to learn from the American mistakes. I do not believe that Europe should go for a total free-for-all. That is why I carefully used the word "liberalisation" rather than total deregulation. The United Kingdom is in a much stronger position, because of the strength of its domestic carriers, to capitalise on the liberalisation that we hope will take place in Europe. Plenty of our entrepreneurs are beginning to jump the hurdles that are likely to be placed in their way in Europe. Air Europe is a very good example. Majority shareholdings are being taken in companies that are being set up in member countries. The national frontiers that we hope will come down in 1992 are already being jumped by some airliners from a legal point of view. That is thoroughly healthy.

The other problem is the rapid expansion of the industry. The number of passengers using British airports by the year 2005, which is only 15 years away, is expected to double to 123 million. Most of those passengers will use airports in the south-east.

The Committee has carried out its inquiry at a time when there is growing anger over delays at airports and occasional anxiety over safety. However, I stress what the Chairman of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Shettleston, has just said: travelling by air is still the safest way of travelling and that it is getting safer every year. I have just been told that delays at Heathrow are now up to two hours and that pilots and air traffic control officers are beginning to have rows. The relations between air traffic control officers and the pilots flying the aircraft are normally extremely good, but now the tension is mounting. That bodes ill for safety. When people become edgy and irritable, the safety factor has to be watched extremely carefully.

I hope that the Minister will tell us whether he thinks that the national air traffic control system is coping with the problem at Heathrow. Where is the leadership and the good line management that we need? What about the working practices of air traffic control officers? It is a man management problem at Heathrow as much as any other. I believe that it must be resolved.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Does my hon. Friend agree that in many cases the delays are the result of the universal application of flow control, which has detracted from air safety, although the whole purpose of introducing flow control was to increase safety?

Mr. Colvin: I agree. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) will expand on that point later in the debate, if he manages to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am delighted that in its recommendations the Committee stressed the safety factor. I am also pleased that the Committee dealt first with people when addressing the problem of air traffic control. Air traffic control is an extremely difficult task. People of the highest calibre are required. Those of us who have seen air traffic controllers at work appreciate the stress under which they are put. They must be fully trained, rewarded properly for the task that they do and encouraged to do better. I am glad that the Civil Aviation Authority is to recruit an additional 140 officers to help to put right some of their past mistakes. Pay, promotion prospects and working conditions are all factors that are of the greatest importance if we are to encourage the right sort of people into air traffic control. I am very glad that retired air traffic controllers have been recruited to train the new ones. That is a move in the right direction.

Air traffic controllers have to shoulder terrific responsibilities. If we put in place the right pay structure, working structure and conditions of employment to attract the right people there ought then to be a no strike agreement. I know it will be pointed out that the only country that has a no strike agreement with air traffic controllers is Greece, yet that is the one country where the air traffic controllers are constantly on strike, so a no strike agreement is said to be no good. The fact is that they do not go on strike; they just report sick. The right people who will become responsible air traffic controllers have to be the sort of people who serve in the armed forces and the police. They do not expect to have to go on strike. That is why the pay and working conditions of air traffic controllers must be right.

I am very pleased that the Committee recommended that there should be a second runway at Gatwick. I point out, however, that a second runway at Gatwick already exists, although for most of the time it is used as a taxiway. It would be possible for the British Airports Authority to make a new taxiway at Gatwick. The authority already owns sufficient land to make room for it. The planning consent at Gatwick includes a section 52 agreement under which no second runway should be built for another 40 years or so. However, the runway is already there. All that

is necessary is a lengthening of that runway. Then it could be used for one of the purposes for which it was originally intended. There would still be room elsewhere at the airport to taxi the aircraft. The two runways could be used together—one for take-offs and the other for landings without aircraft interfering with one another. It is high time that those hon. Members with constituencies around Gatwick became a little less Luddite in their attitude to a very important asset.

I am pleased about the Committee's recommendation concerning military airports. That recommendation is particularly important for business aviation. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) is in the Chamber. One possibility is that business aviation that at present uses Heathrow should use Northolt. That could work quite well. The runway would need to be realigned, but I am told by executive and business travellers that it would be easy for Northolt passengers to interline with scheduled flights at Heathrow.

I am pleased about the recommendation concerning Bournemouth and Southampton airports, both of which are close to my constituency. A deal between the two airports—for Bournemouth to handle all charter traffic and for Southampton to handle all the scheduled traffic —would mean that those two regional airports could carve up the business between them instead of competing head on and doing each other commercial damage.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As I am sure that there are no Luddites in the Bournemouth and Southampton areas, could the hon. Gentleman explain what he expects Luddites such as the Foreign Secretary to do in relation to Gatwick? This is a serious problem. What is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that Members of Parliament should do in relation to Gatwick?

Mr. Colvin: Legislation would be needed for a second runway at Gatwick if a completely new runway had to be built. That is why I say that powerful forces within Government are working against that. I take the view that some of them ought to be a little more public spirited. That is what I mean by being Luddite.

As to the key to a better air traffic control system in Europe, I believe that the United Kingdom joined Eurocontrol in 1973. I remember being lobbied as far back as 1975 by air traffic control officers who wanted the United Kingdom to be a full member, not just an associate member, of Eurocontrol. At that time most of the lobby was concerned about pay and working conditions and had very little to do with air traffic control. Now the circumstances have completely changed and there is no doubt that all the people who clamour for a pan-European air traffic control system must have in mind Eurocontrol as the basis for that system.

In May 1988 the European Parliament Transport Committee passed a resolution that Eurocontrol be expanded. It recognised the need for an integrated system of air traffic control in western European air space. It felt that the European Parliament had taken the view that the responsibility for this should be conferred on an enlarged Eurocontrol as that would maximise air transport safety, achieve better utilisation of air space and result in speedier handling of traffic, the reduction of air fares, greater passenger convenience, fewer diversions, sounder co-ordination of military and civil air transport and a host of other things. A year ago, when the European Parliament debated this important issue, it reached precisely the same conclusions as the Select Committee.

I am glad that the Select Committee recommended that the LATCC II site should go ahead with all possible haste. When my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate, I should like to know where the LATCC II site is. In their response to the Committee the Government said that the Department of Transport was working on an initial project investment appraisal, yet I do not believe that a planning application for any site has been submitted.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I understand that a shortlist is being considered, and one site is expected to be selected shortly.

Mr. Colvin: That is the prepared answer, for what it is worth.

We have heard some mention of the £600 million that the Civil Aviation Authority has already committed to air traffic control. I am glad to hear that the chairman of the CAA, Christopher Tugendhat, is well on the way to spending that £600 million on his investment programme and other matters. Last year he spent £50 million on a new chain of advanced en route radars, and £10 million on re-equipment at Heathrow. That is all good stuff, but it is chicken feed compared with the £6 billion that the Government have committed to the road system, no doubt thanks to the machinations of the Minister for Roads and Traffic who will reply to the debate. Why can he not do as well for civil aviation? Perhaps the Prime Minister should make him aviation Minister and civil aviation would get more funding. At the moment civil aviation is treated as a poor relation in transport terms. The railways are getting almost as much money as the road system, yet civil aviation has to make do with a paltry £600 million.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he really should not talk such nonsense. We keep repeating, in the hope that some Conservative Members will absorb it, that the capital investment in British Rail is self-generated. Essential and necessary services, some of which no doubt run through the hon. Gentleman's constituency, receive less than £500 million a year.

Mr. Colvin: We are digressing from air traffic control, but it is a fact that the Government are investing 10 times more in the road system than in air transport.

If a lot more has to be spent, where will the money come from? I have mentioned the taxpayer, via the Department of Transport. Surely if we accelerate the programme of investment and spend more money within Europe, Europe itself could be a source of funding. European money is available now for work on infrastructure. If this is not infrastructure, I do not know what is.

There is also the traveller. Ultimately, following liberalisation, fares within Europe should come down. If that happens, there should be some scope for including further costs on tickets to repay some of the investment in air traffic control. En route charges to airlines could go up to pay for some of the improvements. At present the BAA is tied to the RPI minus 1 per cent. formula. If that were re-examined, there might be some scope for encouraging the BAA to spend more on its investment on airline services including airport ATC rather than on other commercial activities.

[Mr. Colvin]

The importance of good communications for people and goods was recognised by the Romans 2,000 years ago. They gave extremely high priority to their network of roads. Their roads ran straight and true, sometimes a lot straighter than European air routes today which, because of national airspace boundaries and zones closed for military use, often include zigzags instead of straight lines. Surely European Governments have a responsibility to straighten their routes and integrate their services. Only by burying national chauvinism and sharing our sovereignty will we be able to provide the air traffic control services that the travelling public needs and wants.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the House that this is a short debate and many hon. Members wish to speak.

8.16 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The Romans had many useful forms of traffic planning. They had compulsory purchase which they enforced with the legions, they had centralised planning and they controlled the means by which it was applied, and they made absolutely sure that it fulfilled the purposes for which it was designed—to get their armies from one point of the empire to another as quickly as possible. That is the precise opposite of the Government's attitude to airport planning and air traffic safety.

The Transport Select Committee took a great deal of interesting and worrying evidence from many people who have to deal with the day-to-day chaos in air traffic control. The points they raised were echoed, in careful but clear terms, in the Select Committee report. The Select Committee asked for measures that are needed urgently to deal with a situation that is rapidly becoming intolerable.

Air traffic planning now needs radical and urgent responses. It cannot be dealt with by a minor touch on the tiller or an arrangement with one of the many split parts of Government planning that seem to be all we are being offered. It is important to remind the House of what the Select Committee report said about safety:

"We recommend that the Government provide, without delay, whatever support and financial assistance is needed. The crisis of airspace capacity is unlikely fully to be solved by the present patching-up process and we strongly recommend that, whatever short-term improvements may take place, the provision of LATCC II should proceed with all speed".

The Select Committee then asked for extra money and made it clear that only the Government could take those important and clear decisions.

What was the Government's response? It was:

"Investment in air traffic control services is financed . . . by airspace users through the charging system without Government subsidy. This ensures that resources are deployed efficiently. The Government will authorise borrowing . . . to modernise and expand the facilities required to provide air traffic services, provided this investment shows the prospect of an adequate economic return."

The Government are prepared to hand over responsibility for this vital form of transport to anyone who can justify the rate of return. It does not matter whether that calculation includes passengers or whether it shows the cost to British industry of constant delays. The Government believe that the only defining and deciding factor must be the market place, which has proved manifestly inept and incompetent. The Government are in the most unholy mess on traffic control. The decisions that must be taken tend to boil down—the industry loves using initials—to the three Ps, people, planes and planning, none of which the Department of Transport is providing.

The Select Committee was asked about leadership. There will continue to be insufficient male and female air traffic controllers if they are not provided with proper pay and support services. Time after time we were told that they were working under such stress that they were finding it increasingly difficult to maintain existing services. Any hon. Member who uses internal services or travels abroad from Britain knows that there are constant problems with slots and constant delays, and that the pressure being put on air traffic controllers is rapidly becoming intolerable for them and, ultimately, for the travelling public because of sheer stress.

The reality is that we are not coping with today's problems, but tomorrow they will be infinitely worse. The Government's planning of air traffic control seems to be the same as their planning of traffic on the Embankment. When it ceases to move altogether, they will begin to take a mild interest, but until that happens their sole solution will be to say, "We know that you cannot move on the motorways, so we shall simply make them wider", which will make it more difficult for people to get anywhere.

The problem is becoming increasingly worrying for people in the industry. We know that there is no overall airport planning. The Committee agreed that it is essential that another runway at Gatwick is built, yet the Government show no understanding of that and have not said how they will solve problems in the south-east. The Government appear to assume that runways cannot be built in the south-east, which is manifestly a policy of despair and abandon.

Some of the Government's responses to the Committee's recommendations, such as on Eurocontrol and flow control, were smug to the point of astonishment. Anyone who has watched the flow system in operation knows that at best it is simply a means of slowing down and managing existing slots. The system is not a solution to the problem; it simply seeks to manage an intolerable situation.

As the Committee noted, Eurocontrol has had a chequered history. In non-parliamentary language, that means that it is insufficiently controlled, that it does not have political decision-making powers behind it, that it does not have enough trained staff, that it does not have the right equipment and that it is not doing an efficient job. I am complaining not only about Maastricht but also about the many other elements that make up Eurocontrol.

Mr. Mans: Will the hon. Lady explain what she thinks Eurocontrol should do? Why does she think that its equipment is inadequate? It is much better than the equipment available at LATCC.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Eurocontrol has never pretended that it is capable of handling all the traffic that will be controlled by the Eurocontrol unit. It is capable of doing a small job in conjunction with existing air traffic controllers, which it has always done in a slightly uneven fashion. The Government say that they will put much pressure on the unit to ensure that it works better in the future. Is there any reason why the Government have not pressed for Eurocontrol to be built in Britain, given the amount of money that will be needed to construct a new air traffic control centre here? I cannot understand why it

should be built anywhere else, but we have not been given a response about the inadequacy of Eurocontrol to deal with the current problem.

When the Department of Transport was asked about the difficulty of dividing traffic in the south-east and sorting out the problems of domestic flights compared with international flights and charter traffic, it said that it was awaiting

"the CAA's advice on the distribution of air traffic between the London area airports"

and that it noted the Committee's view. That is not an acceptable answer. There is not time to wait for a response that says, "If we are lucky, by the time the system has ceased to operate we should have staggered as far as 2005. By then we might need a new runway in the London area, so it might be a good idea to consider the CAA's formal advice before reaching decisions." Those decisions should have been taken a long time ago, but they were not and now the Government are paying for the pressure that they put on air traffic controllers, for the fact that they were not prepared radically to change their terms and conditions and, above all, for the fact that they were not prepared to find some form of retraining. We must have more air traffic controllers, and their equipment must be much more modern. It is no good saying that in 10 years' time we should have a system up and running. The planes stacking up in our airways today, tomorrow and next week will still be there in 10 years' time, but there will be many more of them.

We should like better use to be made of regional airports, but no one pretends for a moment that they will deal with the increasing problems of an air traffic control system that has little room to expand. Closer co-operation between the RAF and civilian controllers might give a little flexibility to the system.

The Government have created a monster, but they do not know what to do with it. Indeed, they are fleeing about two or three years behind the monster, which is galloping into the distance. Soon passengers will at least begin to sense that there is a safety problem. They will not sense it when they are sitting in planes and becoming more and more irritated by the time that it takes to find a take-off slot, but increasingly they will perceive the Government's refusal to train, to pay for that training, to expand planning for airports, to build a new runway and to do something radical about expanding services from the south-east, which will contribute to a dangerous and explosive situation. It may not happen today or next week, but happen it will.

The public will not accept the Government saying, "Thank you for producing a nice report, which we enjoyed reading. We have taken into account evidence from ATCs, the BAA and the CAA. With any luck, they might sort out the problem between them while they are making money." The Government know that that will not do. It is slightly worrying that their attitude is demonstrated by an eloquent, responsible, charming Under-Secretary of State —*[Interruption.]*—a man who is normally eloquent—but not the man who has responsibility for taking the decisions. The Secretary of State should be here, not least as a matter of courtesy to the Select Committee on Transport, which understands the urgency of this problem.

8.30 pm

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): It is timely that we should hold this debate in early July, just as we begin to reach the peak period for air traffic delays. It has always seemed to me, as we have been confronted by news of these delays over the past few years, that they have started to occur partly because of the inadequate air traffic control system—in no way do I equate that with an unsafe air traffic control system—and partly because of insufficient runway capacity.

The Civil Aviation Authority seems belatedly to have recognised the need for more air traffic controllers. We are told that recruitment is increasing, which, of course, is satisfactory. I am bound to remind the House, however, that in 1986 the same Civil Aviation Authority was telling us that there was a surplus of air traffic controllers. I cannot escape the conclusion that there have been elements of poor planning, poor management and poor forecasting which we must lay at the door of the CAA. To be fair, it is probable that inadequate funds have been made available for investment in that aspect of air traffic control. Although I criticise the CAA for its defects, I have a feeling that Government policy towards investment in this vital sphere has not always been what it could be.

There is a need swiftly to minimise the delays that upset our constituents. How realistic is it to expect that that is likely to happen? In my opinion, it is not realistic, although, I am pleased to say, air traffic should improve progressively as more air traffic controllers are taken on stream, more investment in sophisticated equipment becomes available and more liaison with the air traffic control system of Europe becomes the order of the day. I was particularly pleased to note a news item last week that we are—to be fair, on the British Government's initiative —moving more sharply in that direction than before.

I welcome the CAA's decision to publish the punctuality tables. I am informed that that is certainly not the view held by many airlines, whether scheduled services or charter airlines. The publication of the punctuality statistics will give publicity to a situation that has been kept under wraps. If it does what I predict it will do, which is to make the public aware of those airlines that are habitually unpunctual and that there is unpunctuality across the board, whether among charter airlines or scheduled airlines, I hope that pressure will be brought to bear by the public and the airlines on the CAA if it can be proved that a sizeable number of the delays are caused by inadequacies in the air traffic control system. This may mean that the whole thing moves in a circular direction and that the CAA, having decided to publish these punctuality tables for its good reasons, winds up discovering that the resulting criticism comes back to it, leading to pressure to improve its air traffic control facilities more swiftly.

Mr. Mans: Does my hon. Friend agree that the reason for the delays should be published in the punctuality tables? If the CAA, through the air traffic control network, is responsible for the delays, that information should be in the initial tables, so there is no need for this rather long route back to the cause of the problem.

Mr. McCrindle: I would have no objection if the CAA decided that that was a reasonable addition to the publication of the punctuality tables. Unlike the airlines,

[Mr. McCrindle]

which seem to be afraid of the publication of those tables, I welcome them as a means of bringing additional pressure to bear in improving the air traffic control system.

The charter airlines must look not just at bringing more pressure to bear to improve the air traffic control system but at their operational patterns. I wonder whether it is realistic to require a swift, three-journey turnaround each day before they can run an economic system. It has long seemed to me that if one slot is missed, progressive delays are almost inevitable throughout the remainder of the day.

I have two points that I should like to put before the House, and perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister might care to comment. First, should not the CAA authorise considerably less capacity than it has been prone to authorise until now? I recognise that this will not be a popular course to follow when enormous pressures are building up all the time for more and more opportunities to fly.

Secondly, the charter airlines may well be advised to reassess the basis of their operations. It has seemed to me over the past few years that, if it is the only way to run economically, we must start looking at the cost of the package tour. That proposal will not be welcomed by consumer groups or the public in general, but I remind the House that we are already on the way towards a Euro-directive that will provide for something close to no-fault liablility in relation to the hotel content of a package tour. The time may well have arrived to face a considerable increase in cost and opposition from consumer bodies because, arguably, the cost of package tours in the past has been too low. These are matters to which the charter airlines and tour operators must progressively turn their attention.

I am particularly worried by one symptom of the pressure on our aviation system. Last week, there were two occasions at Heathrow airport when four aircraft were involved in what I will call wing-clipping incidents. Happily, there were no casualties and no threat to passengers on board and there was only, according to reports, relatively minor damage to the aircraft, yet those incidents are symptomatic of the pressure on the system, caused to a large extent by the limited number of slots and the dash to get to and from the runways. That is another reason for saying that the pressure on the system is such that we should consider whether, in safety—clearly all of us would wish to promote safety—we can continue with the present slot allocation policy.

That leads me to a brief consideration of runways. Unlike British Airways and BAA plc, I believe that there must be an early decision on future runway capacity in the London area. Most commentators, including the CAA, believe that the case has been made for an additional runway at an airport south of the river. That led the Transport Select Committee to conclude that Gatwick would be the appropriate place, but if that should not happen, we must look at an amalgam of military airports south of the river or in some other way recognise that because pressure on the existing runway capacity is considerable—it will not lessen as we approach the 21st century—clear decisions must be taken soon.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Can my hon. Friend tell us where in the report we would find the evidence that led the Select Committee to conclude that there should be a second runway at Gatwick?

Mr. McCrindle: As my right hon. Friend knows, the evidence is conflicting. There is no doubt that a case can be made for taking no decision on a second runway in the London area while continuing to emphasise the need for additional terminal capacity.

However, an interim statement was issued by the Civil Aviation Authority in January or February this year, in which it pointed fairly conclusively to its belief that by the time we reached the beginning of the next century the increase in the number of passengers wishing to use London airport would be such that, although terminal capacity was important, the provision of additional runway capacity would be unavoidable. If that is correct and one accepts the CAA's approach—although I must be fair and say that it was an interim report and we are expecting the final report soon—it is difficult to escape the conclusion that we should begin to take decisions now if we are to have an adequate runway system to run alongside the additional terminals that are, understandably, preferred by British Airways and by the British Airports Authority.

I remind the House that the Air Transport Users Committee, which is probably the closest we have to a consumer body in this area, has recently said:

> "Flow management is as much a product of inadequate capacity as the inability of ATC to handle the requisite number of movements. If current demands for additional runway capacity in the London area are met, then it will provide some relief to the constant pressure on AT controllers of having to operate 3 of the 4 existing runways constantly at full capacity."

Another runway would provide more options in the event of emergencies and reduce the need to bunch aircraft so closely together, which was the point I made in relation to the incidents last week at Heathrow airport.

BAA plc or, as my hon. Friend the Minister called it, the British Airports Authority, is much maligned. There are many reasons for people making representations against it, and I must take my fair share of the responsibility, having criticised it frequently in the past. If profit maximisation from the London area airports is clouding BAA's judgment about additional runway capacity, that should be taken into account in any decision that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has to announce in relation to additional runway capacity. That is why the BAA would prefer terminal 5 to proceed and I must make it clear that I have no particular objection to that. However, it would not be correct to allow it to proceed without, at the same time, paying suitable attention to the need for additional runway capacity.

It would be fair to say that the BAA is often accused of ignoring the interests of its customers, whether those customers are airlines or people who are waiting to fly from airports. I take the view that, at the least, the BAA's attitude has been somewhat arrogant in the recent past and that that arrogance perhaps stems from BAA's near monopoly of airports in the London area.

I want to make a proposition in the hope that my hon. Friend the Minister may comment on it. When we privatised British Telecom as a near monopoly, we created Oftel. When we privatised British Gas as a near monopoly, we created Ofgas. I cannot see for the life of me, in

retrospect, why we overlooked the opportunity to create a similar body so that the clients of the BAA, be they airlines or especially individual passengers, had a specific body to which they were able to complain as dissatisfied customers of British Gas and British Telecom are able to do.

There is no easy solution to the problem of air traffic control. I believe that we shall be near the middle of the 1990s before we have a system which is adequately staffed and which has sufficiently updated computerised equipment. That, in itself, is perhaps a criticism of past decisions or lack of decisions. I warmly commend the idea of having a body to which dissatisfied customers of airports could apply. That does not happen under the present set-up of the British Airports Authority.

8.44 pm

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): I want to deal with two specific points. But first I want to congratulate the Select Committee on Transport and its Chairman on the report and the Chairman's speech tonight.

I agree with roughly 95 per cent. of the report's recommendations, but I disagree violently with the remainder. My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) has already raised the point in an intervention in the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) about the recommendation of the Select Committee to designate Glasgow airport as the gateway for Scotland and to replace Prestwick airport in its present position.

Not only from debates in the House but from your knowledge of Scotland you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the one thing the Scots like is fighting among themselves. No good wedding or funeral in Scotland fails to end up in a fight. Whenever families get together and have all had a good drink, we settle our problems and fight among ourselves. Here tonight the Chairman of the Select Committee on Transport is putting forward a recommendation which he knows is controversial. He has already been attacked by two of his hon. Friends.

I appeal to the Government to stick to their policy because it is correct. The Scottish lowland airports policy is correct. Retaining Prestwick as the international gateway is correct and leaving the internal, European routes and tourist routes to Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen is correct. I ask the Minister to sustain that policy tonight.

Mr. Snape: As a mere Englishman, I hesitate to attend this wedding, funeral or other excuse for a punch up. However, does my hon. Friend think that Scottish transatlantic passengers would prefer to fly from Glasgow or Prestwick?

Mr. Lambie: I shall deal with that in the remainder of my speech because it is important.

I have been here long enough to know the history of my hon. Friend the Member for Shettleston and to know the policies he has supported in the past. He has now been elevated to the position of Chairman of the Select Committee on Transport and he is becoming contaminated by mixing with too many English Members. When he was a member of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, which carried out an inquiry into the Scottish lowland airports policy, nearly 100 per cent. of its recommendations were accepted by the Government and the Committee came to a unanimous decision. I do not know why my hon. Friend has now changed his mind.

Mr. David Marshall: The Chairman of the Select Committee at that time was my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) and it would not be dishonest to say that a fair bit of arm twisting went on. In addition, the situation has changed greatly since then. That recommendation was that Prestwick became a free port and a free trade zone. That was a novel suggestion which was worth trying, but unfortunately it failed. In addition, our hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) said in his intervention that the policy of the Scottish Trades Union Congress was to support Prestwick. The STUC's policy is also to have one lowland airport in central Scotland serving the whole of central Scotland, so there are a number of contradictions in terms. Unfortunately, as usual, we are not addressing the crucial issue of what is in Scotland's best interests—gateway status for Glasgow airport.

Mr. Lambie: Yes, if we were to start again from virgin territory, it is correct to say that we would have only one airport for central Scotland which, in all probability, would be on the site suggested by the STUC, to the east of Glasgow. However, we are not starting from virgin territory. We are starting from having four airports in Scotland, three of which are in central Scotland. Each of those airports is a centre of economic activity and employment. We cannot change at a stroke and make a decision that will remove one of those main centres of activity, especially if it were to be Prestwick, which is in one of the unemployment blackspots of the United Kingdom.

My hon. Friend the Member for Shettleston knows that gateways are not decided unilaterally by the United Kingdom Government. Gateways and routes across the north Atlantic are determined by negotiations between the United States Government and the British Government. At present the Bermuda II agreement, which was signed in 1980 and which designated the routes or the gateways, is being renegotiated. My information is that those negotiations have come to a halt because the Bush Administration in the United States have not yet settled on a policy. Until the Bush Administration reach a decision, we can go only by the negotiations that took place at the beginning of the process.

The main feature of the present negotiations is the desire of the Americans to use Manchester airport more. They want more routes from Manchester into the United Kingdom and into Europe. That would certainly do away with some of the congestion at the London airports, but it would be to the detriment of Prestwick. As far as I know, the only objection by the British Government—or rather, by the Department of Transport—to the Americans having more routes via Manchester is that that might harm, not British airports, but British air companies, and especially British Airways. That is why there is a fight in the negotiations and that is why that fight will continue when the negotiations recommence. There is a fight between the Americans who want to develop out, from Manchester, and between the British Government who are saying, "If you do that, British Airways should have more routes or gateways into the interior of the United States".

[Mr. Lambie]

I make that point because if Manchester develops—it must develop—in the way in which British Airways and certain other parties want, it can only be to the detriment of Prestwick and of every other Scottish airport that might hope to gain gateway status if that status is taken from Prestwick.

Therefore, all that my hon. Friend the Member for Shettleston and his Committee have done in suggesting that we should discuss a new gateway for Scotland is to say that there will not be a gateway for Scotland. Indeed, Scotland has not yet been mentioned in the negotiations. The English officials at the Department of Transport are not interested in Scotland. They are interested only in the south-east and in maintaining British Airways' rights to gain more and more routes into the United States. Manchester will become the gateway to the north of Britain and instead of being able to fly from Prestwick or, as my hon. Friend the Member for Shettleston has suggested, from Glasgow, the people of Scotland will lose the gateway status of the Scottish airports and Manchester will become the gateway for north Britain. I have been to too many meetings at which those representing and supporting Manchester have suggested that Manchester is the gateway or the airport for north Britain not to take that as a serious challenge.

Therefore, I hope that the Government will maintain their policy of following the recommendations of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. I hope that they will follow the present policy on the lowland airports of Scotland and maintain Prestwick as the gateway for Scotland.

I turn finally to British Airports Authority plc. When the Government considered privatising BAA, the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs recommended that it should be privatised as a whole. We based our case on the fact that the Scottish airports had to maintain a connection with the London airports because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Shettleston has stated, one of the busiest routes in the world is that from Scotland to London, whether it be from Glasgow or Edinburgh down to London or the reverse. We suggested that BAA should be privatised as a whole so that we could maintain the link between the Scottish airports and Heathrow in particular.

I now realise that that was the wrong decision. If I could start again, I would say that BAA should be broken up and that the individual airports should be privatised and allowed to compete with one another. Of course, as a Labour Member, I cannot accept that policy generally. As a Labour Member, I believe that because the roads and railways are our common features, they belong to the people and should be paid for by the people. Similarly, I believe that airports should belong to the state and that they should be run by the state on behalf of the people. However, accepting the Government's policy of privatisation, I now realise that as Chairman of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs I was conned by Sir Norman Payne into believing that it would be in the best interests of all Scots if BAA were privatised as a whole in order to maintain links with London.

Mr. David Marshall: I was conned too.

Mr. Lambie: My hon. Friend says that he was conned as well. He too signed that report.

Like other hon. Members, I received a letter from Sir Norman Payne in which as well as stating:

"I have pleasure in enclosing BAA's 1989 Report and Accounts.";

he stated:

"Passenger numbers rose to a record 68 million and BAA is committed to providing capacity to meet this and future demand with a substantial programme of capital investment: £395 million for the development of Stansted; £110 millon for the redevelopment of Terminal 3 at Heathrow; £47 million at Glasgow".

That was about half the sum that he had told us he intended to commit to investment in Glasgow. Under the original investment plan, BAA was to spend more than £100 million on Glasgow. Glasgow is one of the most congested airports that I use; even compared with Heathrow, it is congested. It takes only one tourist plane to Palma to run late and the facilities at Glasgow airport grind to a halt.

I put it to my hon. Friend the Member for Shettleston that if we are really interested in the development of Glasgow, we should not fight against Prestwick. Instead, we should fight against the British Airports Authority, which is not providing the necessary investment at Glasgow to allow the airport to fulfil even its present role, at the start of the route from Scotland to London and as an airport serving the tourist trade.

Let the Scots unite. Do not let us fight. Politically, we spend most of our time fighting the English in the south-east who vote Conservative and, unfortunately, usually give us a Conservative Government. But on this matter, let us unite to try to maintain not only national transport in and out of Scotland equal to that anywhere in the world but to maintain an international gateway, which I believe should be Prestwick.

9 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): I join in congratulating the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) on his chairmanship of the Select Committee and on the extremely large amount of work that the Committee has done in producing its excellent report. The Select Committees' work and our debates on the estimates give the House the opportunity to consider matters in depth in a way that is not normally possible. I am glad that the Liaison Committee agreed that this estimate should be debated in the terms set out in the Order Paper.

Let me make a couple of procedural points. The first concerns Back-Bench Members' time. We only have three estimate days in the entire year and to put on a major statement at the beginning of such business is very unfair. I hope that the Leader of the House, who I know is sympathetic in general to Select Committees, will bear that in mind in future.

Secondly, it has been pointed out that the Front-Bench representation is a little strange, given that this is a debate on airline safety. My hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic is primarily responsible for roads and the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) has always shown a great interest in railways rather than in aviation. Having said that, I think that there is an important point to be made. One of the major concerns dealt with in the Select Committee's report was the question of delays. Very often such delays occur not at the airport but on the approaches to the airport, so perhaps it is not inappropriate that my hon. Friend and the hon. Member

for West Bromwich, East should take part. In that connection, I welcome the announcement made at Question Time today about the improvement of the communications with Manchester airport. I flew into Heathrow myself this morning and the greatest delay that I experienced was in queuing up to get a ticket for the Underground. Had a couple of extra windows been open, the whole process would have been speeded up, but as it was there was considerable congestion.

The subject is of great importance to the public, given their concern about aircraft safety and fear of aircraft accidents. I agree with the view that the Chairman of the Committee expressed earlier—that we should talk about near hits rather than near misses. There is grave concern about the matter, as well as the concern about delay.

This is a short debate and I shall make only one or two points. Although I strongly agree with many of the recommendations made by the Select Committee, I completely disagree with the view expressed in recommendation (x):

"We recommend that, in spite of the many difficulties and obstacles and the inevitable controversy, all efforts should be made to provide a second main runway at Gatwick."

A reference to paragraph 58 follows. By an odd chance, I happened to visit Gatwick on the day when the Select Committee's report was published; indeed, I spent the morning in the control tower. The Committee did not visit Gatwick. No one looking at Gatwick from the control tower could possibly believe that a second runway would be sensible. To start with—this is not mentioned in the report—it would mean destroying and knocking down the second terminal at Gatwick, which has only recently been opened. The idea that the runway could be built at an angle to the other runway does not strike me as feasible. Moreover, the whole of the surrounding area is grossly overheated in economic terms—with serious housing and other problems. I am astonished that the Committee should have come up with that recommendation, which it seems to have done gratuitously and without referring to evidence to support its conclusions.

In my view, we need to press ahead as fast as possible with the development of Stansted. The Secretary of State went to the topping-out procedure at Stansted. We have the prospect of a fine new terminal there, and it is important to proceed with that as rapidly as possible. I certainly do not think that the idea of developing Gatwick by means of a second runway is feasible or sensible.

Mr. McCrindle: Does my right hon. Friend concede the point that I made earlier that the Civil Aviation Authority earlier this year said that, if additional runway capacity was necessary, it was most necessary south of the River Thames?

Mr. Higgins: That may be so. However, as my hon. Friend said earlier, he was referring to an interim report and I do not believe that it was supported by the evidence. The argument is very much along the lines that I have put forward with regard to the development of Stansted airport.

The Select Committee on Transport also considered aircraft routes and I hope that we can consider that matter very carefully. At the moment, aircraft routes very often cross main centres of population. That is an historic accident dating back many years and the routes on the south coast in particular are in the wrong places and cross areas where they cause the maximum noise disturbance.

I welcome the Select Committee's conclusion about night flights. The Select Committee took comprehensive evidence, including evidence from the British Airports Authority, that in some places night slots are not taken up and would not greatly help the problem of day-time congestion. We must consider the great noise problems that night flights still cause, despite the increased use of quieter aircraft.

The Select Committee also considered in great detail the use of military air space. It is extraordinary that large areas of air space which could be used are at present taken up for military purposes, not least along the south coast and several other routes to Europe.

I tabled a series of parliamentary questions about that some time ago. It is extraordinary that the Navy, in particular, takes up large sections of the English channel which might otherwise be reasonably used for civil purposes. Some of the replies to my questions about firing ranges seem to refute the old argument that what goes up must come down. I was assured that a great deal of firing was carried out, but no one had the remotest idea where the shells eventually landed. The Select Committee was right to draw attention to that matter because we must deal with the problems with aircraft routes, particularly to Europe. Obviously many other aspects must be considered in the light of the Select Committee report.

This debate gives us the opportunity to consider these matters in depth and in a way which was not possible before we had the Select Committee system set up on a departmental basis. Once again, I congratulate the hon. Member for Shettleston and his colleagues on giving the House an opportunity to debate these matters in a more sophisticated manner than used to be possible.

9.7 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), my parliamentary colleagues on the Committee and the Clerk of the Committee on producing a first class report. I want to follow the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) who suggested that if there was any consensus in this debate it might be on the point that the Department of Transport should contact the Ministry of Defence and ask it seriously about its perception of its needs in 1989. There is a widespread feeling among hon. Members on both sides of the House that that should be done.

I want to speak up first of all for the air traffic controllers, those hard-pressed people who suffer enormous strain, who work often in terribly unsatisfactory and claustrophobic conditions in towers and elsewhere. To put it bluntly, some of us marvel at how they perform their jobs as well as they do and that there are not more accidents rather than the near misses and occasional accidents which hit the headlines.

I want to raise two of the Select Committee's recommendations with the Minister. Recommendation (vi) states:

"It seems to us that 17 years is too long for an ATCO II to have to wait to reach the top of the incremental salary scale and we trust that this point will be considered in further salary negotiations."

The answer was:

"The CAA agrees that the current salary scales are too long. Negotiations with the IPCS are well underway and it seems possible that a complex package of changes may lead to a reduction in the number of years."

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

What is the policy on people who reach the peak of the incremental scale? Certainly the anecdotal evidence is that there is great dissatisfaction about the time that people must wait for all kinds of promotions.

I direct the Minister's attention to paragraph No. (xxxv):

"We believe that the operation of ATFMUS"—

that is, air traffic flow management units—

"will now steadily improve. There may well be some difficulties between European states, especially with the central ATFMU and we recommend that the Department of Transport keep a close watch on progress and be ready to step in, if necessary at ministerial level, should there be a need to resolve political problems".

The Government's answer was that the

"CAA and the Department of Transport are keeping a close watch on progress on the central ATFMU. The Department will not hesitate to intervene at the appropriate level, should the need arise."

That is a classic ambiguous statement. What are the Government going to do about the unit? Is the matter being tackled seriously?

Time is short, but I shall quickly raise two other matters. One relates to a question that I asked the Minister on 18 April 1988 about aircraft fire safety. I asked:

"what assessment he or the Civil Aviation Authority has made of the fire safety implications of considerable quantities of duty-free alcohol being carried aboard large passenger aircraft; if he will examine the feasibility of siting duty-free shops in arrival lounges only; and if he will make a statement."

The Minister replied:

"The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for air safety regulation. It says that there is no evidence that carrying duty-free alcohol on passenger flights is in itself dangerous. We do not propose to review the siting of duty-free shops."

I have a question about that. There may be no evidence, and it may or may not be true that duty-free alcohol is in itself dangerous, but we are not at all persuaded that it is not dangerous. It could be very dangerous. I do not think that I exaggerate in any way what we were told at Heathrow and elsewhere on various all-party visits. It is the considered judgment of many of those who bear major responsibilities in airlines that it is an extra hazard to carry considerable quantities of duty-free alcohol. No one is suggesting that people should not have a drink on board an aircraft. That is not the argument at all. The argument is totally different. It is about carrying enormous amounts of drink in racks and elsewhere, which, if arrangements were properly made, could surely be purchased at duty-free shops on landing. The only argument against it is that, when they land, passengers may be in more of a hurry than when they started out and would not want to go to duty-free shops. That boils down to a clear profit matter.

The issue that we have to face up to is whether profit on that basis is worth the extra possible danger of an accident happening, with heavy bottles tumbling out of racks and injuring heaven knows who, and creating an extra fire hazard.

On 18 April I asked the Minister:

"With regard to the Civil Aviation Authority, Christopher Tugendhat writes:

Nevertheless, we would be happy to see any international moves to eliminate its carriage, such as may happen in the EEC over the forthcoming period."

I asked whether there had been any further EEC discussion on this issue of the dangers of carrying a great deal of heavy alcohol. I went on:

"That quotation was from a letter dated 15 April. Can the discrepancy about the CAA's attitude be cleared up? How much sense does it make to have 500 bottles of booze in the cabin of a jumbo jet during an emergency, bearing in mind the risks with regard to fire and weight?"

The Minister replied:

"The hon. Gentleman does not provide any discrepancy when he reads out the letter from Christopher Tugendhat. Clearly, if 500 bottles are not being carried there could be a saving of £12,000 a year, and that point was made in 'The Green Capitalist', which was reviewed in the *New Scientist*. The important point is that where there is a safety risk the CAA takes action, but where there is not, it does not."—[*Official Report*, 18 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. 540.]

Are the Government quite sure that the CAA, when part of it says that there is no safety risk, is correct? What is the assessment of the Department of Transport? The Minister has access to considerable expert opinion, and I hope that he will at least say what the considered view of the Department of Transport is on the risks of carrying this massive amount of heavy glass and liquor hither and thither across the airways of the world. Would it not be much simpler, apart from anything else, in terms of fuel if this were tackled, and some arrangements made by those who want duty free to collect it on landing rather than hauling it across the skies?

In all this discussion, we should take into account that one of the things that would particularly help the Scots and those in the north of England would be greater railway investment. The most recent figures that the Library has for railway assistance as a percentage of gross national product are as follows: in Luxembourg, 2·88 per cent., in Belgium, 1·14 per cent., Italy 0·83 per cent.——

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Are the figures that the hon. Gentleman is reading out those for investment in the railways or those for public spending in the railways, including current subsidy?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that the debate is not about railways.

Mr. Dalyell: Others wish to speak, so I shall send this table to the Minister. I should welcome a comment on it. The direct answer is that those are percentages of total state assistance. The grant paid under EEC regulations 1191/69 comes in a different set of figures. I should like some answers to the figures, in writing.

9.17 pm

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Some of the contributions made tonight have summed up some of the problems facing civil aviation. Far too many decisions are dictated by interests other than that of the future of British civil aviation. We have had some internecine strife between Labour Members over Scotland. One suspects that that has little to do with what is the best answer for civil aviation in Scotland.

I have the greatest respect for my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins). I understand his feelings, and they might be mine if my constituency were his, but many of the proposals about Gatwick are based on considerations other than the future of aviation. Those of us who supported the Chairman of the Select Committee

genuinely tried to look at those interests rather than at the partisan interests. We leave it to others to put their gloss on the proposals.

Hon. Members have referred to extra runways in the south-east. We are proud that we have the first and second international airport, in terms of international movements, in Heathrow and Gatwick. We also have a national airline of which we should be very proud. However, the problem remains that if we cannot continue to allow that airline the use of an airport that will enable it to increase the number of flights, and if we try to run the first and second international airports in the world with only three runways each, that policy is doomed to failure. There are many airports in the United States with three or four runways that cater for far fewer passengers than we do and operate fewer movements than we do.

In our report we were not trying to upset the constituents of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing or trying to undermine the value of property around Gatwick. We merely said that it did not make a lot of sense for the second biggest international airport in the world to try to operate off one runway. If my right hon. Friend considers the evidence we took from witnesses, he will discover that on several occasions Committee members asked witnesses what they thought about the future of Gatwick, and invariably they answered that it should have a second runway.

The report is not just about runway capacity; the main consideration is the state of air traffic control and its future. Despite what my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) said, we had no evidence to suggest that the Government had denied investment to the CAA. What was admitted, of course, was that the CAA was not good at managing what money it had been given. That is the key to it. Governments, quite rightly, are suspicious of giving too much money to those who do not spend it wisely. It is no good wringing one's hands and saying that we should have done this or that in the past, as the CAA has admitted that it had not done enough or was doing enough to prepare for the future.

We must admit that the explosion in travel that we have witnessed in the past few years was not foreseen by many people, least of all the airlines, which only a few years ago bemoaned the fact that the number of passengers was decreasing. When we visited Copenhagen, the head of air traffic control told us emphatically that he and his colleagues had not foreseen the enormous increase in the number of flights and in the number of people who wanted to fly that had occurred in a short time.

Under Mr. Tugendhat the CAA has now addressed itself, albeit late, to the problem. The Government have also suggested that they are willing to see that the CAA invests properly in the future. It will not be until 1994-95 that we have a level of air traffic control that will be able to cope even with current demand. Even then that provision will give us only some 30 per cent. extra capacity.

My main argument in support of the Committee's report is that 1994-95 will answer today's problems. I agree with the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), however, that by then we shall be faced with even greater problems, with a futher increase in demand. Therefore, we must think now about the investment and systems that will increase enormously capacity into the next century.

We were lucky enough to visit the Royal Aeronautical Establishment at Bedford and there we were told about a fourth dimensional system of air traffic control. We were also told, however, that much more research was needed and that it might take up to 15 years before that research became operative.

It is absolutely essential that we ensure that the research undertaken in this country is pushed ahead as far as possible, otherwise I suspect that the kind of problems that we have had with congestion in the air and congestion on the ground will be subjects to which the House will return again and again in the next 15 years.

I agree with those who have mentioned the problems of morale and staffing in air traffic control. I am convinced that, at long last, the CAA has addressed itself to what was becoming a serious issue. Those of us who talked to air traffic controllers became convinced that they were unsure of their future, unhappy about the way in which management related to them and extremely unhappy about their pay structure. The response in the report and the response of the present chairman of the CAA start to address those problems. I admit that, with the best will in the world, it will be impossible in the immediate future to recruit the number of air traffic controllers necessary to meet the anticipated demand.

The Committee says that we are on the right path, but mistakes have been made for which we shall pay dearly. Put in the widest context of moving people and transport generally, we have come to realise that, as the people of this country, Europe and the world become more affluent, they want to travel more and more. It is the Government's responsibility to ensure that they can travel as they wish, safely and without undue delay. It is an enormous challenge, not merely to the CAA, traffic controllers and airlines, but to the Government.

9.25 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I am sorry that we have been prevented from hearing the contributions of two hon. Members who are still waiting to speak. One of the most annoying aspects of debates in this House is how often people sit patiently without being allowed to contribute. I join other hon. Members from both sides of the House in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) and the Committee on their report, the merits of which can be measured by the fact that the Government's response has been reasonable and detailed. That is not always so when such reports are published. I do not say that the Opposition agree with all the Government's responses, but, unusually, the Government have shown some signs of forethought and many of the Committee's eminently sensible suggestions have elicited reasonable responses from the Department of Transport.

The debate can be broken down into three main sections. We have heard much about the problems of air traffic control. There has been unanimity among Committee Members, and hon. Members in this debate, that the problems of congestion in the air are long standing and are unlikely to be resolved in the near future. Great hope has been put on Eurocontrol for the future. It is worthwhile for all countries, including our own, to give up some sovereignty of their own air space for the common good.

Eurocontrol has been around for almost 30 years. Although Government Ministers these days make optimistic noises and projections for the future, it would

[Mr. Peter Snape]

have been possible to introduce what they are advocating at virtually any time over the past 30 years. The fact that we appear, belatedly, to be moving forward does nothing to alleviate the enormous congestion problems that we shall face over the next five, six or seven years.

There is some degree of unanimity on the attitude of the Civil Aviation Authority towards air traffic control problems. It was pointed out from both sides of the House that, as recently as two years ago, the authority talked about redundancy and early retirement for air traffic controllers. Belatedly—again, this is welcomed by both sides of the House—the authority has embarked on a detailed recruitment campaign to combat shortages and the overwork from which many air traffic controllers suffer.

Earlier, my hon. Friend the Member for Shettleston referred to safety. He said that there was no concrete evidence to show that safety was at risk. I think that both sides of the House would welcome that. We are all concerned about air safety. For understandable reasons, newspapers pass through phases in which certain issues appear to be topical. Last year, they entered a phase in which air misses or, as my hon. Friend described them, near hits, were thought topical and newsworthy. Thankfully and mercifully, despite the enormous increase in air traffic over the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe, there has never been a collision involving a civil airliner over this country. It is enormously to the credit of those responsible for these matters that travel by air is as safe as it is.

My hon. Friend the Member for Shettleston said that the Secretary of State had reacted reasonably to the report and that the problems were not all his fault because he had inherited them. That is entirely appropriate: the right hon. Gentleman inherited everything else, including his seat, so why not a few problems too? We welcome his fairness in dealing with some of them.

The former British Airports Authority came in for some stick in the debate. BAA plc has few friends these days and probably does not deserve many. I notice that this morning's *Daily Mail*, under the heading

"Keep your eyes on the runway, BAA",

pans the BAA once again for its obsession with profit making—some might say profiteering—from some aspects of airport management. Yesterday's *Observer* carried a full article headed:

"The airport authorities regret the late departure of your flight, but will be more than delighted to overcharge you for car parking and duty-free goods, whisky, cigarettes, perfumes. . .".

That may sound a bit strong, but it is a view shared by many people.

Many of us believe that the BAA should never have been privatised in the first place, a belief that has been underlined by the sort of complaints——

Mr. Mans: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that all the activities in which the BAA is now involved and about which he complains were carried on before privatisation? They were profitable then and they are profitable now, and there is no evidence to suggest that they affect BAA's role as a provider of airports in any way.

Mr. Snape: I dispute that. Those responsible for running bus and coach services to and from airports owned by BAA plc might well take a view different from the sanguine one advanced by the hon. Gentleman. Privatisation has enabled Sir Norman Payne and his chief executive to do wonders for their salaries and to exploit the captive market of passengers and those who operate airport services.

I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) say that if price restraint on take-off and landing charges and the various other airside charges were eased BAA might not need to fleece the franchisee as it does now. That shows a touching faith in Sir Norman Payne, for which he would be grateful, but I do not share it. Releasing BAA from those contraints would merely enable it to exploit the captive market in the air that it now exploits fairly well on the ground. Any attempt to relax the restriction will, I hope, be opposed by the Minister.

Airport security is also a serious matter. The Minister will know of the degree of public worry about it. I understand from newspaper reports that the United States authorities have developed a machine capable of detecting Semtex in luggage and in the containers placed in aircraft holds. If the Federal Aviation Authority decides to make the use of such machines compulsory, I presume that some of the 40 or so machines that are or order will be installed in Europe. I understand that American airlines intend to install these machines in Paris, Frankfurt and London. What are the Government doing to ensure that passengers on British or other airlines have their luggage screened by these machines? I understand that if the Federal Aviation Authority so rules screening will be carried out only on the luggage owned by passengers on American airlines. That is because the machines will be owned by the American airlines or the United States Government—I know not which. That worries many hon. Members and perhaps the Minister can tell us where we stand on the installation of similar machines and whether passengers on British or foreign airlines using international airports will have their luggage similarly screened.

The hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) was critical about some aspects of the charter airline business and I take issue with him on some points. He should bear in mind that for millions of people their one flight per year is by a charter airline to the sun. The suggestion that delays can be laid at the door of the three-round-trips syndrome so beloved of charter airlines is unfair. Britannia Airways supplies many hon. Members, including me, with a parliamentary briefing on air traffic control delays. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman received a copy. Obviously Britannia Airways has its own axe to grind and one reads such briefings with one's tongue fixed firmly in one's cheek. The briefing says:

"Taking a typical Saturday last summer, 23 July 1988, analysis of Britannia's operational records reveals the following data and causes for delays. Total number of flights: 202. Total delays over one hour: 107. Total delays by ATC problems: 104."

It lists the reasons for delays to its other three aircraft, and none of them was due to the three-round-trips syndrome about which the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar complains. The hon. Gentleman knows a great deal about aviation and the travel business generally. I see from the the declaration of Members' interests that he is a director of Hogg Robinson (Travel) Ltd. where I am sure his expertise is welcome. It takes enormous courage for anyone who works in the travel agency business and who

presumably benefits from cheaper travel as a result to advocate massive increases for millions of other people. It is a bit foolhardy but, as I say, it demonstrates enormous courage on the part of the hon. Gentleman and I congratulate him on it.

Some Conservative Members made the ritual plea for liberalisation. I hope that in that context we can talk about the additional air traffic control problems that such moves are likely to create for flights originating and terminating in Europe as well as for flights further afield. The problems that liberalisation are likely to bring include an increase in the number of smaller aircraft which, of course, still have to pass through an air traffic control system. I hope that at some time in the future—we shall not have time tonight—we can debate the additional problems that such liberalisation might mean for air traffic control.

I should like to ask about the liberalisation of services worldwide. All too often the Government seem to act as agents for British Airways. I realise that British Airways plays an important role in the British economy, but it is a privatised company and welcomes, as it puts it, the embraces of worldwide competition. For example, there has been pressure and protracted negotiations about increasing capacity on the routes to Singapore which have remained unchanged since 1976. Not a great deal of progress appears to have been made. British Airways objects to an increase in the number of flights by other airlines from Heathrow. If British Airways is to compete in a worldwide market, the competition should include more flights by foreign-owned airlines from Heathrow.

The debate, of necessity, has been somewhat truncated. I join the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) in deploring the Government's habit of making a statement in prime time, which diverts the attention of the media from important debates such as this and reduces the time that can be spent upon these important matters. The Government are quite good at that, but the practice is to be deplored.

Once again I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Shettleston and the Committee on a detailed, cogently argued and well-produced report. It deserves the Government's serious response. I hope that many of its

9.40 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): We expect and demand air traffic services to meet a very high standard of safety. The primary function of air traffic control is to prevent collisions and keep aircraft apart. The Committee, as its Chairman, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), said at the beginning of his very important speech, found that National Air Traffic Services has an admirable safety record. The evidence shows that the number of risk-bearing air misses or near hits has declined substantially over the years, despite the massive growth of traffic in recent years. I join those hon. Members on both sides of the House who have paid tribute to the air traffic controllers and their assistants who have coped with the rapid growth of traffic while maintaining high professional standards.

To respond to a point made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), since 1987 the Civil Aviation Authority has moved away from a direct link with the Civil Service and towards a communications policy that is spelt out in the appendix to the Government's response to the Select Committee, with the result that morale is improving and the CAA's opportunity to deal with the unions in the interests of those who work in National Air Traffic Services has improved.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Bottomley: I do not intend to give way to the hon. Gentleman on that point because I wish to answer some of the other points that have been made in the debate. As he said at the end of his speech, we can follow up some of these points in correspondence.

I am sad that my hon. Friends the Members for Wyre (Mr. Mans) and for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) were unable to make a speech in the debate. Both of them would have been able to contribute a great deal of expertise as they both take a great interest in the subject. However, that is one of the penalties of a relatively short debate. As for the family discussion among the Scots, if we had managed to sort out the previous Chairman of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs and the present Chairman of the Select Committee on Transport through a return to the names that their constituencies bore before they were changed to Cunninghame, South and Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, we should have had time for speeches by my hon. Friends the Members for Wyre and for Ruislip-Northwood.

The Committee's report and the Government's response have been rightly praised—not that everyone will agree with every point in either the report or the response. Both the Government and the Civil Aviation Authority join the Committee in basing their views on the facts. Perhaps the greatest tribute that I can pay to the Select Committee is that it got at the facts and then introduced personal, local or national interests.

In response to the Committee's report, we made it clear that we broadly agree with its analysis of the problems facing the air traffic control system and that we accept the majority of the recommendations. We have yet to respond to a number of the recommendations because they require further study. We shall be able to go further when we have received formal advice from the CAA.

We are giving careful consideration to the Committee's recommendations about the future status of the National Air Traffic Services. The possibility of splitting off the National Air Traffic Services from the Civil Aviation Authority should be examined. The Committee will not wish us to rush into a snap decision. Reviews are demanding in terms of management effort. National Air Traffic Services has a great deal on its plate at present.

We have also received a copy of the report prepared for Lord Rawlinson's group. We welcome that independent report as a contribution to the current debate on air space issues. We shall study it over the coming weeks, along with the advice of the CAA and the Select Committee.

While acknowledging that the record of air traffic control safety was "extremely good", the Select Committee rightly was anxious to ensure that the reporting and investigating machinery should be as comprehensive and objective as possible. It is worth reminding the House that if all the miles covered on roads were travelled in the air, instead of 5,000 people dying each year, the figure would be about 650. We are dramatically safer in the hands of the airline and air traffic control than we are on the roads. I was reminded by re-listening to "At the Drop of a Hat" by Michael Flanders and Donald

[Mr. Bottomley]

Swann that the airline coach drivers have instructions to make sure that statistics are kept the right way round. To make the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) feel more at home, if all the miles travelled on the roads were travelled on the railways only 150 people would die each year, so I pay tribute to the railways too.

The Committee recommended the creation of new, free-standing machinery which would be independent from the CAA. We have not been able to accept that in full. We acknowledge the need to develop the system of reporting, investigation and assessment of air misses to cover incidents reported by controllers as well as those reported by pilots. We believe that the new machinery set up by the chairman of the CAA to deal with controller-reported incidents will complement the highly-respected work which the joint airmiss working group does on pilot-reported air misses. One of the reasons why the media has gone off the over-reporting or hyped-up reporting of near hits is the openness of the system. There is no risk-free way of moving and if we can be open about risks we shall get more common sense and factual reporting rather than exaggeration.

The transfer of responsibility for investigating air misses from NATS to the CAA safety regulation group goes a long way towards meeting the Committee's concern that investigation should be independent and objective. We recognise the important part the Department has played in the work of the air accident investigation branch. That was demonstrated by the report on the air miss over Lydd last year.

The Committee's initial concern was with air traffic control safety and the adequacy of the air traffic control system to provide a safe service. I recognise that many other points have been raised in the debate. I cannot answer them all, so I shall answer some of them by correspondence. I want to ensure that the public expectation that the National Air Traffic Services will handle the traffic expeditiously and efficiently will be achieved with safety as the priority. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made that point repeatedly and he would want me to repeat it tonight.

The system has not been able to keep pace with the rapid growth in traffic experienced in the past few years, mainly because of growth in the economy rather than deregulation or liberalisation. Severe delays were experienced last summer and may emerge again this summer. That is not only a United Kingdom problem. People quote Britannia Airways, but they are not talking about air traffic control in Britain alone. There is similar experience overseas. My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) was absolutely right in suggesting that perhaps more airlines providing air services to charter companies should build in recovery time as the railways do. Those who expect to run their planes without anything going wrong are working on a false expectation. My hon. Friend's point was brave, sensible and right.

There is a problem with the drive towards further liberalisation if we get things moving wrong. Air traffic control authorities in Europe will find any excuse to cling to outdated restrictions on tariffs and market access. The immediate causes of air traffic control congestion are diverse, ranging from spasmodic industrial action in different parts of the continent to failures which occur from time to time in air traffic control computer systems. But the fundamental cause lies in the shortage of air traffic controllers. For substantial periods of the year the systems all work close to capacity. There is little slack to fall back on when things go wrong. A failure or shortcoming in one place quickly produces a knock-on effect across Europe.

The Government, airlines, airport operators and the providers of air traffic control services have all been planning for years on the assumption that the demand for air transport will continue to rise, but even then there were long delays in airports last summer. It was known that there would be pressure on the system. Air traffic controller disputes in some countries are a sad fact of life in aviation today. Disruption on that scale had not been anticipated and we have all been forced to rethink our approach to the problem of congestion.

The responsibility for planning and operating air traffic services rests on the civil side with the CAA, with Ministry of Defence involvement on the military side. The point which has been made about military air space has been dealt with by the dangerous areas users' group, and perhaps we shall put out a bit more information on that. The possible gains may be mildly exaggerated when one looks into the facts, as I did. We heard about the increased number of trainee air traffic controllers and the bringing back into service of those who are training them; that was a useful point on which the Committee built. Additional resources are available in the United Kingdom.

Last summer's delays have brought home to everyone concerned the interdependence of European air traffic control authorities. I was grateful for the remarks by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East on that point. Flights could not leave United Kingdom airports because of congested airways on routes to Europe. Flights from the continent to north America were delayed because of congestion in the United Kingdom's air space. Few countries in Europe could genuinely claim to be free from blame, and the problems grew as the summer wore on. The days are past when such problems can be tackled by one country alone. It has been widely recognised that we must improve co-operation and co-ordination between European countries.

Last year, the United Kingdom held the presidency of Eurocontrol. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State decided that we must take the lead in strengthening the organisation and give it the chance to take necessary measures. Last July, my right hon. Friend wrote to all European Community Transport Ministers who had not joined Eurocontrol to persuade them to do so. We were pleased that Italy and Spain subsequently announced that they intended to join, and they are now in the process of doing so. From outside the Community, Turkey and Malta have recently joined and Cyprus is likely to become a member by the end of the year. That increased membership will strengthen Eurocontrol and help it to play the crucial role that we foresee for it.

In September, my right hon. Friend wrote to all west European Transport Ministers proposing the creation of a central flow management unit to co-ordinate flow throughout west Europe. That proposal was unanimously approved at a meeting of the European civil aviation conference in Frankfurt in October. Eurocontrol was given the job of building and operating the system. Last week, Eurocontrol Ministers approved the detailed implementation plan. The nucleus of the central flow

management unit has been set up. We now look to Eurocontrol to implement the phased introduction of the system over the next four years.

Many people are calling on us to go a stage further by adopting a unified system of air traffic control across Europe. A sudden transfer of all responsibility to a single European authority is not feasible, but the Government have not ruled it out as a long-term objective. The priority is to devise and implement practical measures that will improve co-operation and co-ordination between national systems. It would be counterproductive to divert the efforts and energies of those working in the sector away from these practical measures on to what might turn out to be an illusory ideal.

One of the most important recommendations in the Select Committee's report was that more emphasis should be placed on Eurocontrol. In our presidency year, we helped to revitalise Eurocontrol, which, as the Committee said, has had a chequered history. The highly successful meeting of Eurocontrol's permanent commisson last week confirmed that Eurocontrol is rapidly assuming a major role. There is now widespread political backing for it throughout Europe, and it seems to be rising to the challenge.

My right hon. Friend's priority, on behalf of the nation, is to improve co-operation, acting through Eurocontrol. If that is successful, Europe's air traffic control systems will become more integrated and interdependent. Increasingly, decisions will be taken on a common basis. Our approach to Europe as a whole is to take practical steps, and, once they are agreed, to make them stick. Experimentation with grand designs is not an option when the safety of air transport is at stake.

We should try to build on practical safety measures. The hon. Member for Linlithgow, if I may have his attention for a moment, again raised the question of bottles, which are normally made of glass and contain liquid oxygen of 40 per cent. proof, dropping on to passengers' heads. It is ludicrous for people who may have spent between £200 and £1,000 on a journey to try to save £1 or £2 by carting a weight from one part of the world to another. It is just as ludicrous that they carry so much luggage. I am concerned about things falling out of lockers on to people's heads, but I am more concerned about a person with a 20 kg suitcase than one person with a bottle. I hope that more people will ensure that the bottles that they carry are made of plastic, and that includes their shampoo bottles. Obviously, there is some risk of carrying such stuff around, but it is pretty small. I have seen one tragic major air crash. I do not think bottles of booze made much difference to it. People should realise that international agreement would be needed for any significant change, because all air lines, not only British ones, must be controlled. The opportunity of more competition and the point about most terminals needing to be rebuilt will not go away. People should follow the example set by the hon. Member for Linlithgow and myself and not buy the stuff. There are better things to do with time and money—

Mr. Lambie: What about Scotch whisky exports?

Mr. Bottomley: Whenever possible, I do drink whisky.

Mr. Dalyell *rose—*

Mr. Bottomley: I have dealt with two points made by the hon. Gentleman and I have not dealt with some points made by other hon. Members.

The friends of Prestwick—

Mr. Dalyell *rose—*

Mr. Bottomley: It would perhaps be less selfish of the hon. Member for Linlithgow if he were to let me deal with the points made by three of his hon. Friends.

The Government agree with the majority Scottish view that Prestwick should be the international gateway airport across the Atlantic. Several services available from Glasgow to European destinations have not been taken up. The Government negotiate the routes. It is up to the airlines to use them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) rightly said that much is happening. We want to ensure that the growth in movements is accompanied by increased safety. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) made a classic speech, starting with the Romans. She went on to talk about the importance of subsidies, but it is investment that is important. That answers another point made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow, if he is still listening. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) pointed out that some of the Committee's conclusions would not have the wholehearted agreement of all involved. The Government's policy on Gatwick was made clear in our response to the report.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) talked about some of the issues involved in this form of transport. It is important to make sure that we continue to increase the safety of all forms of transport. I remind the House again that the number of people who tragically lose their life in air and rail crashes pales in comparison with the number killed on the roads. If we can make roads equally safe by paying attention to details, and if we can improve the road network in the same way as air traffic control systems have improved, we will be doing our job. We are not saying to people that they should not travel. More people want to travel and they should have the opportunity to do so safely. We must work in increasing co-operation with our fellow Europeans and others around the world.

I apologise to hon. Members who have not had the opportunity to speak and to those whose points I have not answered in detail. In view of the excellent report and the Government's response, which has generally been welcomed, it is right to allow the Chairman of the Select Committee to have the last word.

9.56pm

Mr. David Marshall : Unfortunately, this has been a short debate, but an important one. I congratulate hon. Members who have participated, and I commiserate with those who could not take part.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) about the importance of estimates debates. I hope that the House will give serious consideration to increasing the frequency of such debates. That is important and would benefit, in particular, Back Benchers who often do not have the chance to debate the fruits of their labours in Select Committees.

The debate highlighted several matters of concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House. It is

[Mr. David Marshall]

encouraging to see how much common ground there is between us on many aviation and transport issues. There is not such a great deal that separates us. Indeed, as the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) said, it was amusing that the greatest disputes and divergences of opinion were between Members of the same parties on two different issues. Scottish Members disagreed on which airport should be Scotland's international gateway and Conservative Members from the south-east on whether there should be a second runway at Gatwick or anywhere else in the south-east.

My hon. Friends the Members for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) and for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) concentrated on the need for safety, for better man management and for improvements for staff, to make better use of regional airports and to look closely at the operations of the British Airports Authority plc and British Airways. They are all extremely important matters in debates such as this and vital to the future of civil aviation.

The hon. Members for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) and for Wellingborough and the right hon. Member for Worthing took on board the problems of 1992 and spoke about how Eurocontrol should develop in future, the problems of runway capacity in the south-east, punctuality in chartered airline scheduling, flight paths over major centres of population, night flights, the use of air space, especially military air space, near misses and the BAA.

My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) summed up the debate from the Opposition Front Bench in his inimitable style and made a number of telling points.

I hope that the Secretary of State will consider anew the points that have been made in the debate. This is one of the few Transport Select Committee reports to be debated on the Floor of the House. With two reports to be published later this year—one, in two weeks, on airport security and the other, at the end of the year, on roads for the future —I am sure that this will not be the last such debate. The Minister tried his best to answer a number of the points made by hon. Members. I hope that he will keep his word and that he will enter into correspondence with hon. Members and let us have the answers to the points that were raised. I am sure that we will all be grateful to him for that.

It being Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to paragraph (5) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates), to put forthwith the deferred Questions necessary to dispose of the proceedings on Estimates 1989-90, Class VI, Vote 3 and Class VIII, Vote 2.*

Class VI, Vote 3

Question put,

That a further sum, not exceeding £24,044,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1990 for expenditure by the Department of Energy on salaries and other administrative costs.

The House divided: Ayes 173, Noes 10.

Division No. 287] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Sir David
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*

Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Michael Fallon.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Hardy, Peter
Salmond, Alex
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Martin Redmond and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Class VIII, Vote 2

Question put,

That a further sum, not exceeding £156,213,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1990 for expenditure by the Department of Transport on assistance to shipping; civil aviation; central administration; certain licensing and testing schemes; research and development; road safety and certain other transport services; including civil defence, grants in aid, international subscriptions, and residual expenses associated with the privatisation of transport industries.

The House divided: Ayes 156, Noes 11.

Division No. 288] **[10.12 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'l's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Sir David
Moss, Malcolm
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Hardy, Peter
McCartney, Ian
Salmond, Alex
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Martin Redmond and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Question which he was directed to put pursuant to paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on voting of estimates, &c.)*

Estimates, 1989-90

Question put,

That a further sum, not exceeding £65,359,143,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges for Defence and Civil Services for the year ending on 31st March 1990, as set out in the House of Commons Papers Nos. 207, 231, 232, 413 and 442. *—[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

The House divided: Ayes 150, Noes 12.

Division No. 289] **[10.24 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkinson, David
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John

Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Sir David
Moss, Malcolm
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Alton, David
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Buckley, George J.
Cox, Tom
Dalyell, Tam
Hardy, Peter
McCartney, Ian
Salmond, Alex
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Martin Redmond and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the three foregoing Resolutions and upon the two Resolutions [6 July] relating to Estimates, 1989-90, by the Chairman of Ways and Means, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. John Major, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. Peter Brooke and Mr. Peter Lilley.

CONSOLIDATED FUND (APPROPRIATION) BILL

Mr. Norman Lamont accordingly presented a Bill to apply a sum out of the Consolidated Fund to the service of the year ending 31 March 1990, to appropriate the supplies granted in this Session of Parliament, and to repeal certain Consolidated Fund and Appropriation Acts: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 117.]

BRUNEI (APPEALS) BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 90(6) (Second Reading Committees), That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not exempted business. Objection having been taken, Second Reading what day?

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

SOLICITORS (NORTHERN IRELAND)

Motion made—[Mr. Lightbown]—and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Solicitors (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 22nd June, be approved:—

The House divided: Ayes 131, Noes 7.

Division No. 290] **[10.40 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkinson, David
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Sir David
Moss, Malcolm
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Rhodes James, Robert
Rowe, Andrew
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Cox, Tom
Dalyell, Tam
Hardy, Peter
McCartney, Ian
Redmond, Martin
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c),

LIMITATION (NORTHERN IRELAND)

That the draft Limitation (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 11th May, be approved. *—[Mr. Lightbown]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

TRADE MARKS

Motion made—[Mr.Lightbown]—and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No 102(5) (Standing Committees on European Community documents)

That this House takes notes of European Community Documents Nos. 8896/84 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 3rd December 1987, and 4090/86 and the Department's Supplementary Explanatory Memoranda of 6th November 1987 and 3rd December 1987 relating to trade marks; and recognises the importance for the completion of the Single Market of both the creation of a Community trade mark system and the harmonisation of national laws relating to trade marks:—

The House divided: Ayes 125, Noes 8.

Division No. 291] **[10.52 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkinson, David
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob

Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Sir David
Moss, Malcolm
Pawsey, James
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speller, Tony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Buckley, George J.
Cox, Tom
Dalyell, Tam
Hardy, Peter
McCartney, Ian
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Martin Redmond.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Planning Restrictions and Crime Prevention

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

11.3 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for being here at this hour and I apologise to him for not having been able to let him have the text of my speech in advance, although I am quite sure that he will provide me with a satisfactory reply.

It is not my purpose to indict Departments, although it may appear that I am being a little critical of them. I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to confirm that all Departments recognise the importance of crime-prevention measures and the need to ensure that petty bureaucratic restrictions in the name of planning do not get in their way.

The story starts with a chap who runs an antique shop somewhere in my constituency. I am being careful not to identify him because I do not want the press to go sniffing round him. If my hon. Friend the Minister is aware of the man's name, I hope that he will not mention it. His shop has been broken into three times over about the past year; much stock was stolen and much damage done. The cost of insurance was to be so huge that it would have put him out of business, so, sensibly, he installed some iron shutters. There is nothing unsightly about them; they are painted dark green and tone in with the rest of the street. A chap came round from the council and told him that he should not have put up the shutters without planning permission. Council officers cannot authorise such planning permission. It must be put on the agenda of the next planning committee, which inevitably would lead to a delay of a couple of months and allow time for at least one more break in.

I did not intend to raise the matter with the council because it appeared that there was an issue of principle that should be taken up. Accordingly, I wrote to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and sent a copy to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office. The Department of the Environment replied 15 days later and stated that it had referred the matter to the Welsh Office. The Welsh Office replied another 15 days later and said that it was busy trying to discover the name of the chap concerned. I did not want it to find out his name, so I wrote, almost by return of post, a mildly reproving letter. I wanted a statement from whatever Department was responsible that burglary prevention devices should not be subject to rather footling planning restrictions.

I received a letter on 23 June from my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, about which I was rather unhappy. It began:

"Thank you for . . . your letter . . . about . . . one of your constituents who put up iron shutters to prevent his shop being burgled."

The second paragraph said that if my constituent wanted advice about how to protect his shop against burglary he should contact his chief constable. He had already put up the shutters and therefore did not need advice from the chief constable. All he wanted was no interference from the local authority.

I replied rather tartly to my hon. Friend, for which I apologise because I have the highest regard for his qualities and abilities as a Minister. He is one of the Ministers whom I most admire. His reply to me was manifestly a little hurt. The last paragraph said:

"You may be interested to see a copy of the enclosed circular".

The circular was not enclosed, so I had to ring up to obtain it. My hon. Friend's reply was rather good, but once again he was trying to discover the name of the chap, which is neither here nor there. In fact he referred to him by name, but I shall not do so.

In his reply, my hon. Friend said:

"Under Section 22(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 planning permission is required when the proposed changes would materially alter the external appearance."

I maintain that putting in steel roller blinds of a colour that harmonises with the rest of the building does not materially alter the external appearance. I hope that after the debate my hon. Friend will have a word with the Department of Environment to make it accept that and to instruct local authorities that this should not happen.

This case seems to run counter to everything that the Home Office says. An excellent circular dated 30 January 1984—a little old, I suppose—refers to the need to take effective measures to discourage burglary. These actions run counter to the spirit of that message. Pettifogging local bureaucracy is getting in the way of the admirable efforts of my hon. Friend the Minister to reduce the spate of burglaries.

I want to raise another matter and, for once, no blame attaches to any Government Department. Mrs. Banks, a splendid lady from Kinmel bay in my constituency, brought all her neighbours together to organise a neighbourhood watch scheme—something that my hon. Friend the Minister strongly approves of; indeed, the Department has issued an excellent circular to that effect. To make the scheme effective, Mrs. Banks discussed the matter with the local electricity board and put up signs according to lighting standards. The signs were in accordance with the board's requirements, being the correct size and height. They did not obscure any street signs and clearly stated that the area was a neighbourhood watch area.

The Welsh Office has been very helpful, saying:

"the Department has decided to give automatic approval to any Neighbourhood Watch (or Industrial/Business Watch) signs on trunk roads provided those signs meet simple criteria related to siting and size of signs."

The signs completely fulfilled those criteria. The local borough council, Colwyn council, agreed, but Clwyd county council's area surveyor then came into action. In a letter dated 2 March, headed "Neighbourhood Watch Signs", he said:

"I must advise you not to take any action with respect to the erection of the signs until you have heard from the County Surveyor."

In due course, on 18 April, Mrs. Banks heard from the area surveyor:

"My Assistant . . . reports that most of the signs in question appear to have been attached to street lighting columns within the highway, and I must ask you to remove these signs immediately, and arrange for their re-erection detailed in the County Surveyors letter dated the 30th March, 1989."

The letter of 30 March said that any signs should be put in people's gardens. Obviously, burglars driving along the highway looking for a suitable area would not see signs in the garden but would see signs on the lamp posts.

Once again—this problem is much easier—I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to make it clear that county councils should not throw their weight around in this way, especially when they are acting directly contrary, not merely to the spirit of neighbourhood watch campaigns, but to the explicit instructions issued by the Home Office about the signs. A press release dated 30 March 1988 makes it plain that the Home Office considers that, provided the signs do not obscure street signs and are the right size and height, no planning objection should be made.

I have given two instances of effective measures against crime that have been impeded, if not sabotaged, by the foolish application of planning regulations. I should be grateful to my hon. Friend for anything that he can say now or that he can undertake to do by way of further correspondence to ensure that this form of obstruction does not recur.

11.13 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): It is characteristic of my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) that he has taken up so much time to look into the welfare of two individuals—Mr. A, as I shall call the gentleman who my hon. Friend does not wish to have named, and Mrs. Banks, whose name may be spoken in the Chamber.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this Adjournment debate so that he can discuss the cases of his two constituents—one named and one nameless—and so that he can raise the important issue of crime prevention. My hon. Friend feels strongly about the issue and I and my 12 colleagues on the ministerial group on crime prevention feel just as strongly that the actions of individual citizens, such as Mr. A and Mrs. Banks, are the type of actions that have done so much collectively to reduce recently the level of property crime and hence to produce an overall decline of some 6 per cent. in crime during the past 12 months, which is the biggest single fall since Winston Churchill was in No. 10 Downing street. We have been saying for some time that a rising crime rate is neither inexorable nor inevitable. The work of individuals is beginning to ensure that that statement will be found to be correct.

The particular cases which my hon. Friend has outlined tonight show that there is still much work to be done. We cannot be complacent or congratulate ourselves when bureaucracies, either national or local, fail to deliver the goods or the requisite information in the way that my hon. Friend has the right to expect.

In the case of Mr. A, the proprietor's understandable wish to protect his livelihood put him at odds not with the security-mindedness of the local planning authority, but rather more with its procedures. All organisations have procedures, regulations and routines and no place has more than the Chamber in which we are speaking tonight. Most have been introduced for sound reasons and some are beneficial. Some can also be tiresome from time to time. Misunderstandings arise and someone needs to step in to untangle the knot of misunderstanding, as my hon. Friend has.

I understand that, happily, the two sides in the case —the constituent of my hon. Friend and the local authority—are now talking to each other with a view to resolving the matter and it looks as if a satisfactory resolution to the case is in prospect. I and my hon. Friend

[Mr. John Patten]

the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales have done all that we can, as outsiders, to ensure that that is the case.

Planning regulations run to the heart of this case. Planning authorities have to balance within their statutory powers the needs of the community at large against the wish of the applicant to receive planning permission. Developers or proprietors of shops are always wise to consult local planning departments and local police crime prevention architectural liaison officers so that crime can, as much as possible, be designed out of new buildings at an early stage. That is not so easy with old buildings when works involve rehabilitation or the bolting on of effective crime prevention devices. However, local authorities have considerable freedom and flexibility and owners contemplating improvements to the security of their premises should always talk to the planning department and to the police.

I will now develop my response to the argument in the case of Mrs. Banks before trying to draw the two cases together in response to my hon. Friend's wish that we should circulate further information. I am sure that people around the country wait eagerly daily for more Home Office circulars. My hon. Friend believes that we should circulate a further statement on crime prevention. The cases of the shop and the signs for the neighbourhood watch scheme both point to the need for more explanation.

Neighbourhood watch signs are an obvious expression of the activities of individual active citizens gathered together to do something to prevent crime. Alas, a few local authorities have taken overall exception to neighbourhood watch signs and have refused permission for such signs to be erected. As a direct response to that bizarre behaviour, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment made regulations early last year —described in the press notice of 1988 to which my hon. Friend referred—enabling organisers of properly organised watch schemes, established in co-operation with the police, to display signs without first having to obtain the local planning authority's consent—here is the twist in Mr. Bank's case—provided the sign is not placed on "highway" land, which has an existence in law. Therefore, the so-called "deemed consent" provision refers to everything in a local authority's area with the exception of highway land. However, my right hon. Friend has encouraged highway authorities to grant automatic permission for signs on the highway—such as on lamp posts—unless they would cause a hazard to traffic or pedestrians. I have no idea whether the signs erected by Mrs. Banks could be judged to cause a hazard to traffic or to pedestrians——

Sir Anthony Meyer *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend shakes his head—he feels that they are positively beneficial in their effect. If that is the case, I believe that it is well within the discretion of the local authority—here I speak as a humble Home Office Minister rather than as a Department of the Environment Minister, learned in these things—to allow such signs to be erected on lamp posts on highway land, unless they cause a hazard to traffic or upset pedestrians in some way. Driving around the country, I have seen many such signs, erected on lamp posts to the benefit of local neighbourhood watch schemes and thus of local communities. Provided that it is satisfied that no hazard is caused, I urge the authority to exercise its discretion as soon as possible.

When we consider the shutters outside the shop, in the case of Mr. A and the neighbourhood watch signs that Mrs. Banks has caused to be erected in her area, we come up against the need to issue to local authorities and to other interested parties, such as the police forces, which are in the lead in crime prevention, some further refinement of the advice that we issued in circular 8 of 1984, which my hon. Friend eventually saw. My hon. Friend suggested that we should perhaps issue a circular to local authorities saying that planning permission is not required for crime prevention installations provided that they do not project on the highway or are not obtrusively unsightly.

That is a difficult proposition for me to answer tonight as I am not ministerially responsible for planning issues. However, I will take into account what my hon. Friend has said because I agree with the drift of his argument that it seems necessary to review and update the advice given to local authorities and others in the inter-departmental crime prevention circular 8 of 1984, issued five years ago. We are actively considering how new guidance might be framed, and we will be inviting views on our proposals in a few months' time with the hope of issuing something definitive before the end of the year. When the draft guidance is put out for consultation, I shall ensure that my hon. Friend is sent a copy and has the chance to make his comments. It may become clear that the important issues of detail such as my hon. Friend has identified should be dealt with in that guidance, and I will be happy therefore to consider their inclusion in that framework. I hope that my hon. Friend will take up that offer when he sees the draft guidance and has the chance to comment on it.

I hope that my hon. Friend is reassured by my words. I certainly do not treat his words about Mr. A or Mrs. Banks lightly, as I hope I have shown. My time has been well spent because I have had the opportunity to respond to questions about those two cases and to inform the House that we are intent on reviewing the circular and issuing new guidance towards the end of the year. We shall be guided and educated in that by my hon. Friend's excellent speech, to which I have been pleased to reply.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-four minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 11 July 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

INTERNATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK BILL

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (BECKTON) BILL
Orders read for consideration of Lords amendments. To be considered on Thursday 13 July.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (NO. 2) BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Nuclear Defence Industry

1. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has made an assessment of how many jobs are dependent upon the nuclear defence industry.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): Our very broad estimate is about 40,000.

Mr. French: What proportion of those 40,000 jobs does my hon. Friend expect would be placed in jeopardy if the Green party's defence policies were ever implemented?

Mr. Sainsbury: In that very unlikely event, all those jobs would be lost as well as a great number of others in the defence industry throughout the country.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that much more important than the number of jobs involved is the fact that the peace of the world and the future of our country are dependent on the nuclear defence industry?

Mr. Sainsbury: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. The nuclear deterrent has proved its worth in the years of peace that we have enjoyed in Europe. I hope that we will continue to enjoy those years of peace because of our continued possession of an effective deterrent.

Nuclear Planning Group

2. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to discuss the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons with members of the Nuclear Planning Group.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): My right hon. Friend will next meet his colleagues in the Nuclear Planning Group in the autumn, when they will discuss a range of matters concerning nuclear issues.

Mr. Cran: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Soviet Union modernised its tactical nuclear weapons in the 1980s—this decade—and that NATO, by trying to redress that imbalance, is not turning its back on peace but simply ensuring peace by having parity in such weapons in Europe?

Mr. Hamilton: That is correct. There is enormous numerical superiority in the Soviet systems, and they have been modernised all the way along. If we are to maintain the flexible response of the mix of nuclear and conventional weapons for our deterrence, it is important that these weapons are kept up to date.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: The justification for short-range nuclear weapons has been the gross imbalance in conventional forces in favour of the Warsaw pact. If President Bush's initiative is sucessful, to the extent that conventional arms reductions have been achieved or are substantially under way by 1992, is not the reality that there will be no willingness in the United States to develop a follow-on to Lance and even less willingness in the Federal Republic of Germany to have it deployed there?

Mr. Hamilton: The reality is that flexible response is an essential part of Alliance policy. Even with reductions in conventional weapons, I think that we will keep to that policy. That was confirmed at the recent summit.

Sir Antony Buck: Does my hon. Friend agree that the reasons for modernisation are precisely the same as those that actuated the Labour party to modernise our nuclear deterrent by the introduction of Chevaline? The only difference is that the Labour party did it without telling anybody and we do it openly.

Mr. Hamilton: That is absolutely right. That was a period when the Labour party took a more responsible attitude towards defence. It is a great pity that the Labour party's new review has not taken us forward one jot.

Mr. O'Neill: Does the Minister of State agree that one reason advanced—usually the main one—for the existence of short-range nuclear forces is the disparity between the conventional forces of the Warsaw pact and NATO? If the CFE—conventional forces in Europe—talks reduce those forces to parity and then below, what justification will there be to retain short-range nuclear forces?

Mr. Hamilton: As the hon. Gentleman well knows, the justification for flexible response is that the enemy should not at any time contemplate attack because of the series of responses that might result. That is the whole basis of NATO policy. It was confirmed recently at the summit, and Labour Members are the only people who are out of step on this matter.

European Fighter Aircraft

3. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the latest stage reached in the contracts appraisal for the radar and receiver equipment planned for the EFA development.

9. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in respect of the radar system for the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: Bids have been received from two consortia for the development contract for the EFA radar. These are currently being actively considered by the four nations participating in the EFA programme, and a final decision will be made as soon as possible.

Mr. Dykes: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. He will understand that I obviously support the GEC-Marconi combination——

Mr. O'Neill: Why?

Mr. Dykes: Because it is partly in my constituency. It is therefore understandable.

Before the Opposition spokesman gets overexcited, will my hon. Friend say whether the delays, which are already excessive, are due more to technical complications or to the price that is being offered? Will there be an early end to this delay? It has gone on long enough and there are considerable anxieties among defence contractors.

Mr. Sainsbury: I appreciate what my hon. Friend says about delay. The decision is taking longer than I would have liked. My hon. Friend will appreciate that the choice is difficult. It involves a key element in a very important project. It is most important that all matters, including important technical and cost and contractual aspects, are fully covered and agreed by the four participating nations.

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend may be aware that the delays on the radar decision have given rise to some reports from West Germany that the whole nature of the EFA project may be reconsidered. Can he assure the many thousands of aircraft workers in my constituency, whose futures are tied up in this project, that the Government are 100 per cent. committed to it, and will do all that they can to maintain the commitment of the other partner nations to its early conclusion?

Mr. Sainsbury: I assure my hon. Friend that we and all the other participating nations are committed to the project. In 1986, all four nations signed a general memorandum of understanding, and a further memorandum on the development of the aircraft was signed as recently as November last year. That demonstrates the participating nations' commitment to the project.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister's answer that a decision will be made as soon as possible, but not as soon as he would like, does not comfort us at all. He said on 10 November 1987 that he expected a decision to be made in "early spring next year"—early 1988. It is now summer 1989. What has happened? Is this yet another example of the Government's mismanagement of the procurement industry? Will we now have another highly sophisticated, extremely expensive aeroplane flying round with cement in its nose?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman has a vivid imagination when it comes to identifying what he regards as mistaken procurement decisions. I hope that he understands the importance of EFA radar and the complexity of very high-performance radar. As I said, the decision has taken longer than I hoped, but he will agree that it is very important that we take the right decision in the right way.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will my hon. Friend remind our German partners that unless a decision is reached, preferably unanimously, as soon as possible, the export potential of this aeroplane could be greatly prejudiced? It is in their long-term commercial and operational interests to fall into line with the Italian, Spanish and British partners on the project.

Mr. Sainsbury: All the participating nations will be conscious of the points that my hon. Friend rightly makes. This important aircraft has export potential, although that is a long way down the line. The most important thing is to reach the right decision on the radar and to continue the project in the right way.

Malaysia (Arms Sales)

4. **Ms. Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current agreements and what recent changes have been made to them, between his Department and Malaysia about arms sales.

Mr. Sainsbury: The current arrangements are between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Malaysia and are encompassed in a memorandum of understanding concerning defence equipment procurement and related services and a memorandum of understanding and a sales agreement relating to the sale of six ex-Royal Navy wasp helicopters and associated equipment. There have been no changes to any of those documents since they were signed.

Ms. Lestor: Is the Minister aware that I had to have the mental gymnastic ability of Houdini to find out from his Department, the Prime Minister and the Overseas Development Administration whether aid was ever discussed in the context of arms sales? That was always denied, yet on Friday 7 July I received a reply saying that Her Majesty's Government had written to the Malaysian Finance Minister on 28 June saying that it would be unacceptable to link aid with arms. If they were never linked, why was it necessary to write such a letter? Why were all my questions given such evasive replies by various Departments? Why will not the Minister now publish all the correspondence relating to those deals?

Mr. Sainsbury: My recollection is that Mr. Houdini was an escape artiste. The hon. Lady may be trying to escape from her own imaginings about linkage. The explanation is merely that the Malaysian Government suggested that aid be considered and it was made clear to them that that was not acceptable. That has been made clear to the hon. Lady and to the House in the answers that she has received.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Does my hon. Friend accept that Her Majesty's Government deserve the congratulations not only of the House but of the country on having secured a contract that promises to guarantee jobs at home and to enhance Britain's standing and influence in an important part of the world? I hope that my hon. Friend will not listen to the miserable carping of Opposition Members which serves only to destroy our defence industries, not to build them up as he has done?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. It is not unexpected that Commonwealth countries such as Malaysia should be recipients of aid and,

I am happy to say, that they should purchase defence equipment from the United Kingdom. As my hon. Friend says, defence exports provide many jobs—more than 100,000—throughout Britain. The attitude of the Opposition and the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) would threaten all those jobs.

Navtex

5. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the Hydrographer's department will be able to promulgate notices to mariners *(a)* electronically and *(b)* direct on Navtex; when shipping forecasts will be broadcast direct by Bracknell on Navtex; and how much British Telecom charges for operating the Navtex frequency.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Hydrographer currently broadcasts information, which may subsequently be included in the printed Admiralty notice to mariners, on Navtex. Neither the Meteorological Office nor the Hydrographer has any plans at present to make Navtex broadcasts direct from Bracknell or Taunton respectively. Weather forecasts from the Meteorological Office are passed to British Telecom International for inclusion in Navtex broadcasts.

I understand that the Department of Transport is charged by British Telecom for Navtex broadcasts, and that currently it costs 3·9p per word for each broadcast.

Mr. Field: Is my hon. Friend aware of the considerable commercial potential of electronically available notices to mariners? Is it not extraordinary that, having passed information to British Telecom the Hydrographer's department then has to receive the Navtex signal to make sure that the information has been properly broadcast? In this day and age could not arrangements be made for the Hydrographer's department to broadcast the information direct?

Mr. Sainsbury: We have considered my hon. Friend's suggestion. It would be technically feasible to make such broadcasts direct, but it would not be more efficient or cost effective than the current arrangements whereby British Telecom is paid for promulgating those broadcasts, which are extremely valuable to mariners.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Does the Minister agree that one ship that might take advantage of the notices promulgated by the Hydrographer's department would be HMS Southampton when it has been repaired? When does he intend to announce the contract for repairing HMS Southampton?

Mr. Sainsbury: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his ingenuity, but I have to tell him that Her Majesty's warships do not use Navtex.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

6. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the implications for British defence policy of the current number of countries accepting the principle and practice of nuclear non-proliferation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As one of the depository powers of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, the United Kingdom is actively committed to preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and welcomes the growing number of accessions to the treaty. This is entirely consistent with British defence policy.

Mr. Heffer: As 140 countries support the non-proliferation treaty, and as the Minister says that the Government actively oppose the spread of nuclear weapons, will he explain why the Government are not reacting positively to the initiatives of the Soviet Union? Do they really believe in the non-proliferation treaty? Is he aware that the Government's attitude makes life difficult for Pakistan and other Asian countries which are equally opposed to the spread of nuclear weapons, because it undermines their position?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is letting off those nations that want to have nuclear weapons and refuse to sign the non-proliferation treaty. As he knows, when the treaty was drawn up, it recognised two categories of states —nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states. We were in the first category.

Mr. Hill: My hon. Friend will have read the full text of Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev's speech in Strasbourg last Thursday in which he made particular mention of further concessions. Will he give us some information about how his Department will make progress on that? Are we being bamboozled by one of the biggest propaganda exercises that the world has ever known?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is right to suggest that we must beware pre-emptive disarmament among our allies. It is right to respond to the initiatives of President Gorbachev, but we must realise that he is taking them and making gestures from a position of enormous numerical superiority, so he can afford to do so.

Mr. Cartwright: As the Government now argue that short-range nuclear weapons will still be needed in Europe even if the present conventional imbalance is negotiated away, on the ground that only nuclear weapons can deter a conventional attack, how can they object to existing non-nuclear states following the logic of his argument and seeking to obtain nuclear weapons?

Mr. Hamilton: The spread of nuclear weapons throughout the world is an extremely unhealthy development, and if the hon. Gentleman does not see that, I despair of him.

Mr. Baldry: To refer back to the remarks of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), is it not disturbing that when complex East-West negotiations are continuing so many Opposition Members either wittingly or unwittingly appear to be auxiliaries to the Soviet negotiating position? Does that not demonstrate that Britain's defences will never be secure in their hands?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, but I do not think that anything has changed. Some Opposition Members have seemed to speak up for the Soviet Union on every possible occasion for as long as I have been in the House.

Mr. Heffer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister suggested that some of us speak up for the Soviet Union on every possible occasion. I object to that. My record in this House of opposing the Soviet Union when it went into Afghanistan and on other occasions is second to none. I do not want him or any other hon. Member to lie about us.

Mr. Speaker: Everyone recognises the hon. Gentleman's position as a highly honourable Member of the House.

Chemical and Biological Weapons

7. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the United States stockpile of chemical and biological weapons *(a)* currently and *(b)* over the next five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It would be inappropriate for me to comment in detail on the defence capabilities of an ally. However, the United States is a party to the 1972 biological weapons convention. This prohibits the development, production and stockpiling of biological weapons.

Ms. Abbott: Is it not the case that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has stated exactly what its stockpile is and that the United States of America is threatening to increase its stockpile of chemical weapons?

Mr. Hamilton: For a long time the Soviet Union would not say how big its stockpile was, and it was only the other day that it came out with the figure of 50,000 tonnes, which does not tie in with any of our estimates. We estimate that the stockpile is several times larger than that, but it is difficult for us to say with any exactitude, because a complex calculation is involved.

The United States produced no chemical weapons for 18 years, from 1969 to 1987, but that unilateral moratorium was not matched by the Soviet Union.

Sir Dudley Smith: An earlier supplementary question referred to Mr. Gorbachev's speech last week to the Council of Europe about chemical weapons. Is it not more important than ever that the Soviet Union's words should be matched by deeds?

Mr. Hamilton: Absolutely—and we are watching with interest to see whether the Soviets adhere to their commitment to get rid of their existing stocks of chemical weapons. There is not much sign of it at present.

Mr. Cohen: Has not the United States planned a large increase in its stock of binary chemical weapons? Is there a danger that other countries will say, "If the United States can do it, we can do it, too"? It is the proliferation argument all over again. Should not the Minister advise those countries to go for a global chemical weapons ban?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is right, and that is exactly what we are doing: we are going for a global chemical weapons ban, which is what we all want to see. We must remember, however, that the United States went into the manufacture of binary chemical weapons because the Soviet Union refused to stop manufacturing chemical weapons. It continued to manufacture them throughout those 18 years and built up vast stocks, and eventually the United States felt that it could not stand by any longer.

Mr. Brazier: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Soviet Union's stocks of chemical weapons are much larger than those of the West? The Soviet Union has 14 factories, compared with just one in America. Will he also confirm that the Soviet Union continues to refuse to allow an inspection by the West of its facility at Shikhany, notwithstanding the agreement that it made with us?

Finally, will my hon. Friend confirm that all the questions that Opposition Members have asked recently have related to our weapons, rather than to the much larger stocks held by the Soviet Union?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is right. The Soviet stocks are very large and, as I said earlier, the Soviets admitted only recently to having any stocks of chemical weapons at all. It was very disappointing that they were unable to show us a large plant at Shikhany which we were sure was involved in the manufacture of chemical weapons; they said that it was a purely commercial organisation with no defence interest. That gives us some idea of their lack of straightforwardness on the issue.

Mr. Boyes: There is no doubt that the Americans are spending billions of dollars on chemical weapons and delivery systems. Nevertheless, President Bush is on record as saying that he wants to be remembered for ridding the world of chemical weapons; 75 senators have signed a note saying that they want the President to increase his efforts to cut world stockpiles; and last week a senior military man at NATO told me, as well as my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) and other hon. Friends—we were discussing flexible response—that although nuclear weapons might be used first, in no circumstances would chemical weapons be used first.

In contrast, the Prime Minister is on record as saying that the security of NATO depends on the right mix of nuclear, conventional and chemical weapons for all circumstances. This Government and this Prime Minister are prepared to use the most obscene, horrendous and universally condemned weapons first, which demonstrates that once again they are out of step with both British public opinion and the opinions of our allies.

Mr. Hamilton: I am afraid that I do not quite understand the purpose of that question. Is the suggestion that my right hon. Friend said that we were prepared to use chemical weapons first? I do not see how that would be possible, as we have none.

Third Zero Option

8. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received asking him to reconsider his attitude to the third zero.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from individuals and organisations regarding the role of short-range nuclear weapons in Europe. I am sure that the British people support the Alliance's recent rejection of the third zero.

Ms. Short: Has the Government's view changed? The Prime Minister told us that she could do business with Mr. Gorbachev, but it seems that today the Conservative party is rubbishing all the disarmament proposals that people all over the world are welcoming. In particular, surely the Minister knows that the people of Europe and the people of Britain are excited by the prospect of getting rid of short-range nuclear weapons in Europe—East and West. We all want disarmament; it is in all our interests. Why are the British Government standing in the way of progress which would benefit all the people of the world?

Mr. Hamilton: We are certainly not rubbishing the Soviet Union's initiatives. We welcome everything that is

taking place at the moment. We are involved, within the Alliance, in serious negotiations to reduce strategic, conventional and chemical weapons, and we are hopeful that there will be a fruitful result. However, we must be careful to maintain our guard during the negotiations and not to put ourselves at a renewed disadvantage compared with the Soviet Union.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be nonsense if our aircraft did not have a stand-off capability when the Soviets already posses one? So long as they have their stand-off capability, surely we should have such a capability.

Mr. Hamilton: I agree absolutely. That is very important. We should always be able to match the Soviet capability and have systems as up to date as theirs. It is also important that we should adhere to the resolutions passed at the recent summit and ensure that we keep flexible response as part of NATO's strategy.

Mr. O'Neill: Does the Minister agree with the statement by President Bush last week, prior to his departure for Warsaw, that he is still confident that a conventional deal can be struck within the next six to nine months and that, following that, short-range nuclear forces should become the subject of discussion with a view to their removal, at least in part? Do the Government share President Bush's optimism or do they wish to act as the dogs in the manger and hold back the process?

Mr. Hamilton: There is no question of our being dogs in the manger. There are a great number of complicated negotiations to go through. Six to nine months is an ambitious programme, but I am not saying that it cannot be achieved.

Nuclear Deterrent

10. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received on the retention of Britain's independent nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from individuals. The British electorate has consistently endorsed NATO's policy of deterrence based on a mix of nuclear and conventional weapons and the maintenance of an independent British strategic deterrent.

Mr. Sumberg: If my hon. Friend receives any representations from members of the Labour party who are also members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, will he tell them and their leader that it is both illogical and ridiculous to maintain that they can be members of CND and yet support the British nuclear deterrent?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is right. Belief in unilateral disarmament is clearly written into the rules of CND. Members of CND believe that we should get rid of our deterrent as soon as possible. That cannot be combined with belief in a British deterrent.

Mr. Litherland: Has the Minister honestly read the speech of President Gorbachev to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg last week? If and when he does, he must surely come to the conclusion that the real warmonger in Europe is the Prime Minister.

Mr. Hamilton: It is extraordinary for any hon. Member to make a remark like that when the Soviet Union has a totally undemocratic system in which scant regard is paid to individual rights. When one considers the disparities in terms of the armed forces on both sides, there is no doubt in my mind as to who is in a better position to fight a war.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that the British independent deterrent is necessary not just in relation to the Warsaw pact countries but in relation to those areas of the world where non-proliferation is not a term that is used, including countries such as Iran and Libya? Would it not be the height of folly to abandon our ability to deter attacks and assaults from such countries?

Mr. Hamilton: I could not agree more. There is a great risk that if we had a Labour Government we would get rid of our own independent deterrent, our nuclear weapons, and find ourselves being blackmailed by other countries that had such weapons.

AWACS Offset Agreement

11. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made by his Department in monitoring the number of jobs involved in contracts placed under the AWACS offset agreement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The offset obligation between Boeing and the Ministry of Defence is financial and is measured in terms of the value and quality of contracts placed with the United Kingdom industry. However, we are now setting in hand monitoring of employment created by contracts declared in future reports. I am glad to confirm that the level of agreed contracts won by United Kingdom companies has now reached a total value of some $624 million. This is well on the way to the $1·5 billion which Boeing is contracted to spend in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lofthouse: When the Government cancelled the Nimrod contract and bought AWACS from Boeing, did not Boeing promise 4,500 jobs in the first year in the United Kingdom, increasing to 8,000 jobs? Has the Minister any evidence that those jobs will be provided?

Mr. Sainsbury: I think that the allegation to which the hon. Gentleman refers is based on advertisements which Boeing placed in the national press before the contract was awarded. The memorandum of understanding is based on financial achievements. Bearing in mind that quality is also involved, those financial achievements will create jobs throughout the United Kingdom. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact that we have already achieved some 40 per cent. by value of the target, although only some 32 per cent. of the time for the entire programme to be fulfilled has elapsed. That is a great achievement and very satisfactory for British industry.

Mr. Hind: Does my hon. Friend agree that the announcement that he has just made vindicates the decision to buy Boeing AWACS, which was one of the most difficult decisions that the Ministry of Defence has ever had to make? Does he agree that offset deals could not be achieved in any purchase of overseas equipment by the Ministry of Defence if it followed the Labour party policy of stringently limiting the scale of arms sales by Britain and

thereby undermining the effectiveness of DESO, the Defence Export Services Organisation, which has been partly responsible for the offset deal?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend is quite right. There is no doubt that the policies set out by the Labour party stringently to limit defence exports would certainly be damaging to the British defence industry and would make the achievement of offset agreements that much more difficult. I remind the House that all the contracts involve high technology and high-quality goods and therefore are particularly valuable to industry.

Mr. Rogers: If anyone is destroying the British defence industry it is the Minister with his incompetence and mismanagement. On 18 December 1986 the Secretary of State for Defence said:

"Boeing is publicly committed to placing high-technology work with British companies and . . . job losses resulting from the cancellation of Nimrod would be equalled if not exceeded by job gains".—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1986; Vol. 107, c. 1353.]

Now, three years later, those targets have not been reached, whatever the Minister says. There is evidence of that in the Select Committee report. The jobs that have been created are low-technology jobs. How is it that France has such a good agreement for just four Boeing AWACS aircraft while we have such a lousy deal?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman apparently spends more time reading old copies of *Hansard* than more up-to-date reports. If he studies the Select Committee report he will find that we are getting high-technology, good-quality awards in respect of the offset agreement. That is written into the agreement. We have already achieved some $624 million. I should have hoped that the hon. Gentleman would have the grace to recognise that reaching 40 per cent. of the target in 32 per cent. of the time was a worthwhile achievement, rather than trying to rubbish the performance of the British defence industry.

Mr. Soames: Is my hon. Friend aware that although British companies with particular expertise came forward very promptly for the AWACS contract, nevertheless Boeing had to go searching the highways and byways of British industry to find other companies to take part in the contract? Does my hon. Friend agree that it is a measure of the success of the transaction that so many British companies have taken part in it?

Mr. Sainsbury: It is a measure of success that the benefits of the offset deal are very widely spread throughout British industry, particularly the electronics and engineering industries. One of the follow-on benefits that is not covered in the agreement is that many of the firms with contracts in the offset agreement have obtained further contracts not within the offset agreement but much to the benefit of the companies and the work force.

Hospitals

12. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the under-utilisation of armed services hospitals.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Michael Neubert): The utilisation of service hospitals was considered by the Select Committee on Public Accounts in its ninth report of the 1987-88 session. The Government replied in a Treasury minute in February 1989, Cm. 323. The Committee's 21st report of the 1988-89 Session, which also deals with service hospitals, was published on 22 June. It contains further observations which are now being considered.

Mr. Marshall: Will the Minister confirm that the Select Committee on Public Accounts criticised Halton, Wroughton and Haslar military hospitals for failing to agree to treat more National Health Service patients? Why is the Ministry of Defence still dragging its feet on the issue? Will the Minister act immediately to ensure that all military hospitals take more NHS patients instead of leaving so many empty beds?

Mr. Neubert: It may not be appreciated that the service hospitals already take 250,000 NHS patients. The scope for more is limited only by the willingness of local and regional health authorities to accept more contracts. I can report that since the consideration by the Select Committee on Public Accounts, RAF Wroughton has negotiated a contract with the Mid-Glamorgan and Crewe health authorities to take patients of theirs.

Mr. Madden: Have any expressions of interest in becoming self-governing trusts been received from armed services hospitals?

Mr. Neubert: That is, perhaps, pointing the way to the future. Who knows? I may be answering a question on that at a future Question Time.

Force Reductions

13. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the defence implications of reductions in *(a)* conventional forces and *(b)* short-range nuclear forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The greatest threat to stability and security in Europe remains the huge superiority that the Soviet Union and its Warsaw pact allies have in many types of conventional armaments. All the NATO allies are agreed that the elimination of those disparities in conventional forces is our highest arms control priority. The allies have recently confirmed that for the foreseeable future, there will continue to be a requirement for land, sea and air-based nuclear systems, including ground-based missiles, in Europe. Security and stability of Europe would be greatly enhanced if the Soviet Union were to eliminate its huge superiority in short-range nuclear missiles.

Mr. Galbraith: Does the Minister agree that it would make sense to have a lower level of arms all round? That being so, why can we not have simultaneous action on conventional and short-range nuclear forces? Is it not somewhat unreasonable for Britain to insist that we can have no deal which involves any cut in our forces in Germany or which puts British aircraft with nuclear capability on the negotiating table?

Mr. Hamilton: The reality is that NATO has already reduced its short-range systems by 35 per cent. since 1979, but, like all unilateral gestures, it has not got us very far.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Does my hon. Friend recall the words of only two months ago that the purpose of retaining the deterrent is not to use it or even threaten to use it, as enunciated by the hon. Member for Dagenham

(Mr. Gould) on 8 May? What sort of policy would that be for a Government who were attempting to have a nuclear deterrent?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is right. A deterrent does not count as a deterrent unless there is a preparedness to use it. That is why I believe that the country will see through the Leader of the Opposition and will realise that the deterrent would not be worth keeping if he were in power.

Spanish Military

14. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his latest discussions with the Spanish military authorities.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State paid a most successful and interesting official visit to Spain on 19 and 20 June. He had wide-ranging and useful discussions with his Spanish colleague, Senor Serra, on Alliance and bilateral matters, and visited the naval base at Rota. The Ministers reaffirmed their desire that the close bilateral relationship which has grown up between the British and Spanish armed forces in recent years should continue to be developed.

Mr. Dalyell: Have Ministers any reason to disbelieve the Spanish authorities when they claim that the IRA team in Gibraltar had six members and not three?

Mr. Hamilton: I do not think that that was anything to do with the Spanish authorities. A statement was made by Inspector Rayo to Inspector Correa of the Gibraltar coroner's office on 8 August. It was signed by Rayo and witnessed by Correa. On 9 August, Rayo submitted a signed carbon copy of the statement to the Malaga judge and attested his signature. Correa attested his signature before the Malaga judge on 22 August. The copy plus attestations was passed to the British embassy in Madrid. That copy was not sworn and, therefore, of no greater validity. We must emphasise that there is only one statement, but there were two copies.

Trade Unions (Consultation)

15. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to consult the Trades Union Congress or any individual trade union when reviewing Britain's policy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No, Sir.

Mr. Knight: Will my hon. Friend give the House an unequivocal assurance that, when he next reviews policy, he will bear in mind—and, indeed, make it the only consideration—the defence needs of Britain? Will he confirm that the Government will not place the freedom of the country at risk by pursuing a policy of negotiating over beer and sandwiches with trade union leaders whose idea of democracy appears to be based on the principle of one man, one million votes?

Mr. Hamilton: I do not think that the trade unions have anything to say about our defence policy. We shall certainly not take into account what the Transport and General Workers Union says, which is extremely dangerous and threatens the survival of this country.

Mr. Eastham: Would it not be useful if, in future, the Minister at least discussed with the TUC issues such as the selling of the royal ordnance factories, given that three factories were sold off at terrific loss to the taxpayer and hundreds of engineering jobs were lost as a result?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman says that the royal ordnance factories were sold off at great cost to the taxpayer. In fact, they were sold to the highest bidder. I do not know how else one can sell things.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Teresa Gorman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 11 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Mulroney.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the agreement negotiated by the Minister for Overseas Development with the Brazilian Government under which we are to provide technical and scientific aid to Brazil to help it to preserve its rain forests? Will not this be a triumph—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. The agreement that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development signed is the first of its kind with Brazil to seek to preserve the tropical rain forest—the largest block of tropical rain forest in the world. It involves research projects in conjunction with us—with the Royal Geographical Society—on the sustainable development of the forest and on climatic change. As *The Times* said,

"It was a triumph for—

[Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: As *The Times* said,

"It was a triumph for quiet diplomacy of the sort that will be needed . . . to protect the world environment."

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister aware that she was absolutely right to say last December that energy efficiency is crucial in combating the greenhouse effect? So why, according to the Government's own figures, has expenditure on energy efficiency been cut by 15 per cent. since 1987 and is to be cut in half again by 1991? Is not that the record of a Government who talk green but act dirty?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. The part of the energy efficiency budget that is being cut was the part heavily devoted to advertising. In fact, the energy efficiency record of this country is excellent. We use less energy now to produce 25 per cent. more goods than was the case in 1973. It is a very good record on energy efficiency.

Mr. Kinnock: If the Prime Minister is proud of her record and is seriously concerned about energy efficiency, which she says is crucial, will she overrule her Secretary of State for Energy and accept the Lords amendment to the

Electricity Bill which had all-party support and which will penalise suppliers if they fail to give proper attention to energy efficiency?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. They will give proper attention to energy efficiency—and so will consumers, most of whom wish to use energy efficiently to keep down their bills. That is a very important incentive to energy efficiency.

Mr. Kinnock: Can the Prime Minister tell us in straightforward terms, and within the terms of the Electricity Bill, how she knows that private suppliers will take care of energy efficiency?

The Prime Minister: Usually when we privatise things, they have to be run very much more efficiently. *[Interruption.]* For example, when I first came to the Dispatch Box British Steel required £1 billion per year subsidy from the taxpayer. Now it is making £500 million per year profit. That is an excellent example of the greater efficiency of privatisation.

Q3. **Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 11 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: When my right hon. Friend visits France in the next few days for the European economic summit, will she urge her colleagues to continue the sustained and steady policies that have produced growth for all countries in the Community? Will she further urge the summit to support her Government's policies, which are tackling the problems of the global environment?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I believe that it was the experience of the economic summit—particularly during its second cycle, which has just been completed—that sound economic policies have produced faster growth than we have ever had before, a higher standard of living, and a better standard of social services. We shall be looking very much at the economics of better environment. We notice that it is the countries which are more prosperous and have more growth that now have the resources to devote to better environmental conditions, unlike some of the Third world and some eastern European countries. We shall be paying great attention to that factor.

Mr. Ashdown: If the Government's policy on the environment is so good, how is it that the latest figures show that Britain's production of the primary greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, is increasing at twice the world average rate? How will the Prime Minister explain that at the Paris summit next week while opposing further measures for energy conservation?

The Prime Minister: I think that the right hon. Gentleman must be referring to some figures that were compounded by the Oakridge laboratory in 1986. Our published figures do not agree with its comparison between 1986 and 1987. However, as the right hon. Gentleman has asked me about the fundamental carbon dioxide gas, from the figures published from the Oakridge laboratory, which we have not yet seen in detail, the *Daily Telegraph* gave these figures:

"Per capita figures from the Oakridge laboratory for the production of fossil fuels in tonnes of carbon per man or woman"—

the higher the figure, the worse it is—

"United States five tonnes of carbon dioxide for each person, Czechoslovakia 4·2, Bulgaria 3·6, Soviet Union 3·6, West Germany 3·06, United Kingdom 2·9."

Q4. **Mr. Malins:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 11 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Malins: Is my right hon. Friend aware that if Pakistan were readmitted to the Commonwealth it would be warmly welcomed throughout the country, not least in my constituency of Croydon, North-West, where many constituents are from a Pakistani background?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I believe that it will come about at the next Commonwealth conference, and it will be very warmly welcomed. I am glad that we are among the first to suggest and to approve that Pakistan return to the Commonwealth. Of course, it could not be done without the co-operation of India, through Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. We had a successful visit here last week by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto. We were very pleased that we were able to help her with some aid for rural development and extra help for the Afghan refugees, which brings our help for the Afghan refugees up to £15 million in the past 18 months.

Mr. Fatchett: Now that the Government have rolled over to the brewers, will the Prime Minister advise the British Medical Association how much it should invest in the Tory party before the views of the doctors will be listened to?

The Prime Minister: I should have thought that an Opposition party with massive investment from the trade unions was not well equipped to ask that question. With regard to the decisions of my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, within two years all brewers with more than 2,000 pubs will have to have untied 50 per cent. of the number in excess of 2,000. That will add 11,000 free houses, which is equivalent to serving some 3 million customers a year. As the House knows, tenants will be able to purchase, free of ties, soft drinks, non-alcoholic ciders, wines and spirits. In addition, many of the other recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission were implemented in full.

Q5. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 11 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Watts: When my right hon. Friend crosses the England channel to visit Paris later this week, will she recall that last year we celebrated the tercentenary of our own glorious revolution which, as revolutions go, was virtually bloodless—certainly much less so than the reign of terror being celebrated in Paris?

The Prime Minister: I hope that in 1993 I shall be able to go across by the Channel tunnel as Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]* Yes, we managed our revolutions much more quietly in this country in 1688 and 1689 when Parliament took over the authority for the country from

the monarch. Our revolutions have certainly been quieter. Our revolution during the past 10 years—a revolution of high living standards and high social services—has also been managed quietly and very well.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: The Prime Minister will be aware of the intense speculation in Wales about the future of the Welsh Development Agency. Will she assure the House that the Government have no intention whatever of privatising the Welsh Development Agency either as a whole or in part?

The Prime Minister: The Welsh Development Agency will continue the most excellent work that it has carried out under both Secretaries of State for Wales in this Conservative Government. It will continue to attract a fantastic amount of inward investment to Wales under the Tory Government.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Does my right hon. Friend accept that if there is one thing worse than the mindless arrogance of unions which bully the public before they negotiate with management, it is the supine indifference of Opposition Members to the damage done by strikes—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows better than that. He must ask a question within the Prime Minister's responsibility.

Mr. Wardle: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if there is one worse danger than that, it is the danger of inflationary pay demands which threaten competitiveness and put jobs at risk?

The Prime Minister: Let us hope that the negotiations now taking place will result in a successful conclusion so that British Rail can work fully again, serving both the public and freight, and justify the great investment that this country has put into the railways, especially in the past two or three years, including the great investment in electrification. We have now the greatest investment since changing from steam to the modern railway.

Q6. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 11 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bennett: Given the welcome reduction in tension between East and West, and the reduction in regional conflict, does the Prime Minister agree that the potential for arms sales has reduced in the world? What initiatives is she taking to encourage British industry involved in the arms trade to find peaceful alternative products?

The Prime Minister: Of course we welcome the reduction in tension between East and West—we were among the first to do so—but that does not mean that the reductions in arms now being negotiated will come about quickly. For several years the Soviet Union will have a great superiority over us in conventional, nuclear and chemical weapons. The only safe course for all who believe in freedom and justice is to ensure that we, with NATO, have a proper and full defence.

The Soviet Union is not reducing its arms sales capability in any way. It is increasing its arms sales to the middle east.

Mr. Stern: Will my right hon. Friend take time this afternoon to condemn the fact that physically and mentally handicapped people are being deprived of essential services as an inevitable result of the callous withdrawal of labour by the National and Local Government Officers Association?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I most certainly condemn it. I noticed that it was reported this morning that some nurseries and other services might not be running today. Once again, that is the fault of some people of the extreme Left wing in the trade unions who never think of serving the public or of their duty to the public. I am happy to say, however, that many people in NALGO went to work as usual to carry out their duties in the best possible way and in the best possible traditions of local government.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I apologise for not being able to call the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike)—I will seek to make it up to him.

Anthrax (Clwyd)

3.31 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the outbreak of anthrax in Clwyd.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): An outbreak of anthrax has occurred on a pig farm near Wrexham which has a stock of about 4,750 animals. The disease was first confirmed in a pig which died on 19 April. Since then the outbreak has continued, with the latest suspect dying on 6 July. To date, anthrax has been confirmed in 17 animals.

Under the terms of the Anthrax Order 1938 statutory responsibility for confirming the disease rests with the state veterinary service. Clwyd county council is responsible for the destruction of carcasses and the cleansing and disinfection of the premises. Disposal of carcasses and cleansing and disinfection is sufficient to curtail any outbreak. Despite these measures and antibiotic treatment of the animals, the outbreak continues. The normal course of action would be to vaccinate. A new batch of vaccine is being prepared at the central veterinary laboratories.

The continuing outbreak means that slurry must be considered to be infected. Under the Anthrax Order, the local authority is required to disinfect or destroy it. Disinfection requires high concentrations of formalin, which poses health and safety problems. Various disposal options are being considered. To date, no satisfactory disposal site has been identified.

Farm personnel, slaughtermen and others, who come into contact with the pigs, have been advised to be vaccinated. Precautions are being taken to prevent affected pigs entering the food chain, through inspection by veterinary officers on farms and prior to slaughter.

I can assure the hon. Gentleman that my Department and the state veterinary service will continue to give the fullest support to the efforts to curtail this outbreak of anthrax.

Mr. Jones: I thank the Minister for his reply. Does he know that on 28 June the community physician of Clwyd health authority wrote that she was greatly concerned about the possibility of anthrax infection being transmitted to humans from the livestock at Singrett farm? She said that she was worried for the slaughtermen and the meat inspectors. She was also worried about the hazard to the general public from infected meat, as anthrax was "very persistent". She went on:

"I consider that the practice of allowing animals to leave the premises even following veterinary examination is unacceptable in the present circumstances and request that the movement of animals out of the farm should cease under powers granted in the Anthrax Order 1938 until the animal outbreak is brought under control."

I ask the Minister to concede the point made by the community physician.

Does the Minister know that on 15 June, the senior lecturer in farm animal medicine at Liverpool university, Dr. Walton, wrote that he was appalled that a notifiable disease—that is zoonotic as well—could be dealt with in such a low-key manner. He further asked in his letter:

"Is this farmer to continue to medicate his whole herd with the very real risks of tissue residues at slaughter?"

Has the Minister done his homework on tissue residues and the human food chain? A housing estate is 15 yd from the garden of the farm. Farmer Geoffrey Priestley suffers a personal nightmare. I want my constituent, Mr. Priestley, to be helped by the Government. He is a good and clean farmer and even in the foot and mouth crisis he had a clean bill of health. He has been well supported by Gatehouse veterinary hospital at Rossett. There are approximately 4,500 pigs. Mr. Priestley rents 121 acres. Has the Minister discovered the source of the outbreak? I remind the Minister that nine sows have been infected and have survived, and that in the judgment of professionals the contamination must be astronomical. Many sows must be carriers. How does farmer Priestley stay in business and avoid bankruptcy? How will the Minister act decisively to avoid a potential major health hazard?

I remind the Minister that 250,000 gallons of slurry now fill three temporary tanks and must be disposed of. The slurry becomes toxic waste when treated with more than 1 per cent. of formaldehyde. Where will farmer Priestley dispose of that toxic waste? I want the Welsh Office to pay the £30,000 that it will cost to dispose of that slurry. Farmer Priestley cannot afford it.

Next, I want the Welsh Office to implement destocking——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt a Front-Bench spokesman, but this is a private notice question and a question is not a statement.

Mr. Jones: It is a matter of great importance to my constituent. I feel that I should put on record his real worries, because at this time he has no other redress.

I was about to say that I want the Welsh Office to implement destocking, clean up and to give Mr. Priestley compensation. Why should Mr. Priestley be ruined where a notifiable disease is concerned?

Does the Minister know that on 2 July, a highly qualified veterinary surgeon from the hospital told the chief veterinary officer that he felt that the situation had now got out of control? What is the risk of the spread of the disease from manure from the infected pens? The Minister must know that a warm environment encourages the organism to sporulate.

The Minister in his statement appears to have passed the buck. He has fumbled and he has fudged. He and his right hon. Friend have been secretive and laggardly. My constituents face a potential grave health hazard and Mr. Priestley needs a fair deal. I ask the Welsh Office to act as urgently as it might. Will the Minister accept responsibility and will he give leadership? So far there has been none.

Mr. Roberts: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has taken a somewhat alarmist line, but I shall deal with some of the points that he raised. The origin of the outbreak has not been identified, despite extensive investigations by veterinary officers. All kinds of investigations were undertaken into the history of the disease on the farm and into the sources of food—the most common cause of infection. Manure, dust, and other environmental samples were also cultured. Again, the results were negative. Those investigations are, of course, continuing.

As to the risk to the public, I am aware of the views of the community health physician, who has advised that people who, in the course of their business, came into contact with the pigs should be vaccinated. Restrictions on the premises prohibit the movement of pigs and of any potentially infected material, except under licence. All pigs sent to slaughter are inspected by our veterinary officers at

the farm and again on their arrival at the abattoir. Animals who die from anthrax are cremated by the local authority, and subsequently their surroundings are cleansed and disinfected. Treatment with antibiotics is being undertaken, and an emergency batch of vaccine is being produced at the Weybridge laboratories.

The disposal and disinfection of the slurry is the responsibility of the local authority, but the disposal of the remaining waste is, claims the local authority, the responsibility of the owner, Mr. Priestley. Places where the slurry may be disposed of are still being investigated, and it is hoped to begin disposal in the very near future.

There is no compensation mechanism in respect of anthrax, because, while it is a notifiable disease, its nature is such that it is not highly infectious or transmittable animal to animal—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] If hon. Members doubt that, they have only to compare the total number of pigs that have died since 19 April with the very large intensive unit of 4,750 pigs.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is a private notice question, which is an extension of Question Time, I can allow questions to continue for only a further four minutes.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): My hon. Friend is of course aware of the seriousness of the matter, but the public will rightly deplore any attempt to frighten them or to exploit the situation for political purposes. Is my hon. Friend aware that while my right hon. and hon. Friends are confident that he will be careful to watch over the situation, we expect him to exercise the utmost vigilance?

Mr. Roberts: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks, which confirm my own view that there is no need to be alarmist, and assure him that we shall do everything possible to curtail the current outbreak and to deal with the ensuing problem of the slurry.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Over the years there have been many outbreaks of anthrax in Wales, and my experience is that the Department's officials have always done an excellent job to help all concerned. I am sure that the Minister will give the people of Wales, and of Clwyd in particular, his assurance that his officials will do their utmost to safeguard everyone's interests.

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that. There have been seven anthrax outbreaks in Wales since 1983. They were all in cattle, whereas the latest outbreak is in pigs. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the state veterinary service does a very good job on such occasions. By imposing restrictions on the movement of animals, and by inspecting animals at the farm and prior to slaughter, the service is safeguarding both the public and the food chain. We shall continue to seek a resolution to the remaining problems in conjunction with the local authority, which of course has a significant role to play.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Are there enough scientific civil servants to test immediately if an outbreak is suspected? Can the hon. Gentleman assure us that, if an outbreak is confirmed, there are sufficient scientific civil servants to monitor and advise? If the outbreak is traced back to food, will the hon. Gentleman get the animal feed industry into a fit shape to provide proper feed for animals so that the public can be assured of the quality of the food that they eat?

Mr. Roberts: It would be wrong for us to anticipate the source of the outbreak when all the investigations that have been carried out so far have failed to reveal it. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the source is frequently the food given to the animals. If that source is discovered, of course we shall take appropriate action. I assure the hon. Gentleman that there are adequate numbers of veterinary staff to deal with this kind of emergency.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Does my hon. Friend agree that part of his problem comes from the fact that anthrax, although a notifiable disease, is not one for which his Department can pay compensation for compulsory slaughter? Will he urge my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to review thoroughly the categories of disease that should qualify for compensation, because this probably should never have arisen?

Mr. Roberts: I am not sure that the problem that we face necessarily has a great deal to do with the absence of compensation arrangements. After all, only 17 pigs out of a herd of 4,750 have died.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must move on to the statement.

Scottish New Towns

3.46 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Government's decisions on the future of the Scottish new towns. We are publishing today a White Paper, "The Way Ahead", which sets out our decisions in more detail and builds on the earlier consultation document "Maintaining the Momentum".

We welcomed the substantial response to the consultation document, although it meant that the consultation process itself was extended. We are well aware of the key role played by the five new towns in achieving economic success for Scotland and it is for that reason that, following a major review, we have taken a measured and distinctively Scottish approach to their future.

While recognising—few have questioned it—that the time has now been reached to begin an orderly progress towards wind-up, our central purpose is to ensure the continuing economic vitality the towns have achieved. We acknowledge their importance to Scotland's international industrial image. The achievements of the new towns have been outstanding and reflect the commitment and dedication of the boards of the development corporations and of their staffs. I gladly pay tribute to them.

The towns' recent remarkable progress in creating jobs and prosperity has accelerated their growth to maturity. In 1988 I asked the development corporations to determine their key objectives for the next five years, and identify the major remaining development tasks necessary to achieve physical maturity. The Government broadly endorse the resulting development profiles and I know that the corporation staff are anxious to press ahead with these programmes. I can assure them of our support for the work that remains to be done to secure the remaining development of the towns.

Against that background, we have decided that wind-up will begin for East Kilbride and Glenrothes in 1991 and be completed in 1994. Cumbernauld will begin wind-up in 1993, Livingston in 1995 and Irvine in 1996. I believe that that timetable sets a sensible pace, based on the corporations' own appraisals of what remains to be done, but our legislative proposals will afford some flexibility, again reflecting our aim to implement wind-up in such a way as to take account of each individual town's circumstances.

In seeking to maintain the economic momentum and meet the ends of enterprise after wind-up, the Government considered a range of options. We have decided that the most effective way will be through the establishment in each new town area of a local development company. This will be a private sector company formed to own, manage and develop the residual industrial and commercial assets of the former development corporations. In addition, the local development company will fulfil, for a limited number of years, certain public sector functions in its area, under contract to the successor body to the Scottish Development Agency. The kind of functions that we envisage include the promotion of the area, the provision of premises and support for small business and, especially, for inward investment. Local development companies of this kind will, I believe, achieve our economic objectives in an effective and dynamic way. In considering their formation, we shall be willing to give full consideration to management buy-out proposals.

The White Paper details our proposals for the future of community assets, such as public open spaces, halls and local sports facilities. For those, we propose a diverse solution including possible disposal to local charitable, religious or community organisations or sports clubs. The private sector and local district councils may also have a role to play.

On planning, the White Paper makes it clear that the planning system that presently operates in Glenrothes new town, which does not have a Special Development Order, will progressively apply in the other four towns as the wind-up process proceeds. The Special Development Orders will be revoked at the time of dissolution, by which time we envisage that much of the development of new town areas will be complete.

The White Paper sets out arrangements for the reconstruction of Scottish new town finances, following the financial management survey of 1986 and a thorough study by consultants on the necessary amount of debt write-off that forms part of that wider reconstruction. The approach involved is similar to that adopted for the reconstruction of the English new towns' debt in 1986, which was authorised by the New Towns and Urban Development Corporation Act 1985.

Much of the local interest in our proposals centres, understandably, on housing. I confirm our earlier commitment that, until wind-up, each individual new town tenant will have the right to remain the tenant of a development corporation. As dissolution nears, however, choices will have to be made. The Government see two distinct periods here. In the first, running to wind-up, the White Paper makes the corporations' priorities clear. The resounding success of our sales policies and the encouragement of private sector housebuilding will see home ownership this year rise to more than 50 per cent. in the five towns as a whole, compared with only 8 per cent. a decade ago. That is an outstanding achievement. We are equally concerned to see more variety and choice in the rented sector through housing associations and co-operatives. The development corporations have identified a number of locations suitable for the possible establishment of community-based housing initiatives. We shall encourage tenants associations to consider setting up locally based housing associations or co-operatives, where they will be able to participate in the management of their homes and shape the sort of neighbourhood in which they live.

A survey commissioned by the Government of tenants' attitudes in four of the new towns revealed considerable uncertainty among corporation tenants about their future wishes, as well as a lack of awareness of the full range of rented housing options available. Extensive local consultation is needed and, as part of an information programme for tenants, they will receive in the autumn a detailed information leaflet on the options open to them. I am placing a summary of the tenants' survey findings in the Library today, and the full results will be published later in the summer.

At wind-up, when stage two is reached, the option of a partial transfer to district councils is not ruled out. The alternatives, which also include housing associations, co-operatives, private and other landlords, will each be considered on the basis of their potential contribution to

meeting both housing need and the Government's twin objectives of increasing home ownership and providing a wide choice of tenure for those who wish to continue to rent. The present pace of house sales, the new diversification and the rents-to-mortgages initiatives, and the contribution being made by private sector housebuilders are certain to produce a very different housing scene in four years time. The tenants remaining with the development corporation at the time of their dissolution will be transferred to Scottish Homes.

For up to 40 years, Scotland's new towns have grown and matured, providing an attractive environment for their residents and an excellent location for industry, both indigenous and from overseas. The time to prepare for their wind-up, envisaged at the outset, has now arrived. The Government are confident that, with the proposals in our White Paper which I have outlined today, Scotland and the towns themselves will continue to enjoy the important benefits that the success of our new towns has afforded. It remains our purpose to maintain the momentum.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): If the Government are

"well aware of the key role played by the five new towns in achieving economic success for Scotland"

why are they so intent on destroying that very success with such half-baked and ideological schemes?

Is the Minister aware that there will be considerable anger in Scotland and especially in the new towns at the way in which that success is being jeopardised by the Government because of what appears to be a purely ideological hatred of public bodies and a pathological fear of democratically elected bodies in Scotland?

How can the Minister justify the cavalier dismissal of local authorities that appears in the document and the absolute non-appearance of local authorities in any future that the Government have in mind for the new towns?

We accept that the new town corporations must cease to exist once they have completed their task, but is not the three-year wind-up period ridiculously short and will it not create enormous difficulties for all who live and work in the towns?

Are not the industrial plans, in particular, a massive rip-off of public assets in the new towns? Will the Minister tell the House today exactly what those assets are worth, what they consist of and what, if anything, the new companies that he is establishing will have to pay for them? Can they possibly do the job that the new town corporations, often together with the SDA, have done in the past?

What business men will come forward to run those companies—[HON. MEMBERS: "Mr. Bill Hughes."]—unless they are being offered substantial rewards? I am sure that that will be true in the case of Mr. Hughes.

Is not one of the attractions of the new towns their open spaces and amenity facilities, including sports facilities? If the planning of those facilities and their use by all in the community is to be maintained, would it not make infinitely more sense to hand them over to the democratically elected local authorities, who know the community's needs, instead of selling them piecemeal to private companies or giving them away to scouts, churches and so on?

Will the Minister give us a little more detail today of the survey carried out of tenants' wishes for future tenure? Like the survey carried out by the same company, using the same methods, for East Kilbride district council, does it not show that on wind-up the vast majority of tenants —up to 90 per cent.—want to be transferred to the local authority, not to any other form of landlord?

Why does the Minister say that he will place the figures in the Library? Is he afraid to give them to the House today? Will he give us a guarantee today that the wishes of each tenant will be fully respected and that all tenants who wish to transfer to the local authority will be allowed to do so? If not, the Government's case for choice goes out of the window.

Does the Minister recognise that his decision to transfer all remaining tenants to Scottish Homes on wind-up means transferring them to private landlords, because Scottish Homes will cease to be a public landlord in the near future?

Will not this piecemeal and disorganised approach to winding up Scottish new towns make it difficult to sustain the planned growth and development that has been their unique contribution to Scottish life, thus damaging their future and Scotland's economic future?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman asked why we are proceeding with the wind-up of the new towns. He will know that their ultimate wind-up was envisaged at the outset in the legislation that established them. It is plain that East Kilbride and Glenrothes are now close to maturity and that, over the next few years, the other new towns will also be close to maturity. Once the development of their areas has been largely completed, it would be wrong for them to continue to enjoy special privileges not enjoyed by the rest of Scotland's residents, and special funding arrangements which have accumulated substantial borrowings from the national loans fund over the years. We are not seeking to destroy success, but to ensure that the great success achieved by the new towns is sustained after the wind-up. That is what our proposals envisage.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that three years was too short for the wind-up process, but I disagree. Three years will be adequate to complete the wind-up process, particularly when one bears in mind that in the case of the first two new towns it will not start until 1991 and, in the case of the others, until some years later.

There is no question of a rip-off in the disposal of the assets. The corporations will continue to dispose of some of their assets—and, indeed, will be able to fund further developments with the proceeds—but when the local development companies are set up there will be no question of the assets' being handed to them. A price will be paid that will reflect their value at the time, and the proceeds will be for the benefit of the Exchequer.

The hon. Gentleman asked who would come forward to bid. There are a number of possibilities. An existing company may make a bid, a new private company may be established or there may be a management buy-out frame. As I said in my statement, that might have considerable advantages.

We certainly do not rule out the transfer of community assets to local authorities: it is possible that a number will be so transferred, and, if necessary, it may be possible to consider an appropriate endowment to ensure that authorities do not thereby incur excessive losses. I consider it right, however, to give voluntary bodies such as charitable organisations, sports clubs and religious

[Mr. Lang]

organisations—and, possibly, some of the industrial residents of the new towns—the opportunity to become more closely involved with the environment in which they live. Some will, I believe, wish to take advantage of the opportunity to buy the assets that they have enjoyed over the years.

The hon. Gentleman asked for more details of the housing survey carried out by Market Research, Scotland, and I am happy to give him some figures. It is interesting to note that, if invited to make a choice now, more than two thirds of those surveyed would not exercise it—and would therefore be content to remain with the development corporation—while fewer than 20 per cent. would elect to go to the district council. If obliged to choose now, 58 per cent. would choose to go to the district council; but they are not obliged to choose now. If they had to choose at the time of the wind-up, fewer than half would choose to go to the district council. The hon. Gentleman's challenge was that tenants' wishes were not being accepted, but their wishes seem far from clear or precise. That supports our proposal to carry out an information campaign to ensure that all the objections are brought to the attention of the tenants.

Far from being a "piecemeal and disorganised" proposal, these measures, to which much consideration has been given, offer the best prospect for the new towns to move forward to a new environment and to maintain the momentum that they have so firmly established.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Does my hon. Friend agree that the new towns have been a great success in both industry and housing, and that there is no reason why they should not be further enhanced under the proposal that he has announced? Will he try, through the SDA, to promote throughout the rest of Scotland some of the excellent ideas that have borne fruit in the new towns? Finally, can he assure me that new towns with airstrips, which are important for executive travel in Scotland, will ensure that they are still available in the long-term future?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for welcoming the proposal. I certainly agree with his suggestion that the enterprise and ideas that we seek to advance in the new towns should be promoted throughout Scotland, and, if my hon. Friend can contain himself until my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is able to make his statement on the Scottish Enterprise proposals, I think that he will then see the kind of enterprise initatives that we are keen to foster.

I also agree that the airports are a valuable asset. I have flown from the airport at Cumbernauld, and I believe that those assets should be developed, and will be to the advantage of the new town areas in future.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): As one who has lived in, worked in, and at one stage had the honour of representing, one of the new towns, I am appalled by the Minister's proposals. Does he not accept that one of the greatest strengths of our new town communities has been the sense of identity and community that was fostered so carefully in them? Where will that sense of identity and community be respected in the proposed local development companies and the proposed sell-off of community assets?

Mr. Lang: I believe that a sense of community is to be found not only in new towns but in all other towns and cities around Scotland. When the new towns no longer have the special status that they have enjoyed in the past, I believe that the maturity and sense of community that they achieved will be sustained and carried forward into the future. Nothing that we are doing will undermine that.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that, while we in Scotland have welcomed the development of the new towns, there has always been a feeling in the old towns and boroughs that the new towns have advantages not enjoyed by others that have been established for much longer? My hon. Friend's proposals will provide more of a level playing field, and other towns will now enjoy some of the advantages that may formerly have been the sole benefit of new towns. Does my hon. Friend also agree that the introduction of private sector enterprise, skills and initiative will help the new towns to build on what they already have?

Mr. Lang: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. The new towns are extremely important to the economy of Scotland. Over the last seven years, some 40 per cent. of inward investment has gone to them. That has created over 30 per cent. of the jobs that have been derived from inward investment. We are keen to foster and preserve that kind of achievement in the new arrangements. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support of them.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): The 45,000 tenants of the new towns in Scotland and the 250,000 people who live and work in the new towns will view the statement with anger and dismay. Will the Minister give an assurance that the assets will be transferred at full market value at the time of wind-up? Will he also confirm that he is saying to new town tenants that on wind-up they will not be allowed to choose the district council as their landlord?

Mr. Lang: I believe that, far from being angry, the tenants will be pleased that they are not being pressed to make a decision on their future housing, given the uncertainty about their preferences. I canot tell the hon. Gentleman what the value of the assets will be at the time of wind-up, but he may rest assured that the Government's purpose is to secure an appropriate value for them. That value will reflect what the market is willing to pay. There is absolutely no mystery about that.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Does the Minister not appreciate that it is hardly surprising that new town residents are uncertain about which tenure they wish to have, given his refusal to come clean about the choice that will be available to them? If it is indeed the case that the figures that he has received show that less than half would wish to choose the district council, why is he so afraid of putting that choice to every tenant of the new towns? Does he not appreciate that the Government's rhetoric about tenants' choice will sound like humbug to them if he rules out the one option that the largest single body of tenants would wish to exercise?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman seems not to have heard what I said. We have not ruled out the district council as an option. We believe that all the options must be considered at the appropriate time. What is plain is that

the vast majority of tenants have not given adequate thought to the matter. They need to be made more aware of all the options that will be open to them.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): The statement will be deplored by the people who live and work in the new towns, not least the highly professional staff who administer the new towns. Is the Minister able to say a little more about what will happen to those highly professional people? What steps does he intend to take to ensure that they are retained in the service of the new towns until wind-up in order to maintain the efficiency to which the new towns have become accustomed?

Mr. Lang: As the hon. Gentleman will have heard, wind-up will proceed over a period of years, with the last new town completing wind-up some 10 years or so from now. During that time, each new town will approach the matter of divesting itself of some of its activities—by hiving off or by the privatisation of functions—in a different way. There will be opportunities for employees of the new town corporations to move out with the functions that they fulfil. There will also be a measure of natural wastage and retirement, and even early retirement. The redundancy payment arrangements, supervised by the Whitley council and the Scottish National Joint Council agreements, will of course be honoured. In the meantime, we have already given the new towns permission to exercise the appropriate use of retention provisions for key workers.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): As the Member of Parliament who represents Irvine new town, I, too, wish to express my anger about the statement which will lead to a rip-off of public sector assets in the new towns. I am glad that the Minister confirmed that the wind-up will be phased. Will he also confirm that the wind-up of Irvine new town will start in 1996 and that it will not be completed until 2000? I am quite happy about that, because there will have been a general election before that which will return a Labour Government.

I hope that the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman will confirm today that a Labour Government will rescind the statement and continue the build-up of the new towns.

I am glad that the Government are considering the possibility of a management buy-out for the private local development companies. Will they guarantee that Strathclyde regional council or Cunninghame district council will be allowed to bid for Irvine development corporation? Every survey carried out by Cunninghame district council and every ballot among the tenants of Irvine new town shows that more than 90 per cent. of the tenants want the district council as their future landlord if they are taken away from Irvine development corporation. Will the Minister confirm that if those figures are verified in any future survey, the tenants of Irvine new town will be allowed to choose Cunninghame district council as their landlord and will not be handed over to the wolves of Scottish Homes?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to confirm to the hon. Gentleman that the wind-up for Irvine will start in 1996, by which time he will probably be resting at home with his feet up or in another place watching our proceedings. In the meantime, there is a certain amount of work to be done in Irvine. It is clear from the survey that the tenants are uncertain about their future, and if they were invited to choose now, a very small proportion—fewer than one in five—would choose a district council. That underlines our conviction that it is right not to make a firm decision now, but to give the tenants the opportunity to find out more about the alternatives open to them.

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): I am sure that the people of Glenrothes will be dismayed, disappointed and bitterly angry at the Minister's statement. They will feel that it is a betrayal of 40 years of success and achievement in Glenrothes. They will also find the statement breathtaking in its contempt for local authorities, the staff, the tenants and the residents of Glenrothes. Will the Minister tell the House on what model he is basing the private sector company that will take over the industrial assets of the new town? If the three-year time scale is not appropriate because of the problems involved, will he be willing to reconsider that part of today's statement?

Mr. Lang: Far from our indicating contempt for local authorities, in many ways the role of the district council will be enhanced as a result of the proposals. Local democracy will be far more complete than it is now, as it has often been said in the past that development corporations stand in the way of local democracy. In many aspects, such as special needs housing, the housing of homeless persons and the possibility of taking over community assets, the district council will have an important role to play. The local development company will be a private sector company with share capital and articles of association. It will be commercially driven and will be a normal company.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Referring specifically to the industrial and commercial aspects of the proposals announced by the Minister of State, will regional and district councils be allowed to tender to purchase those industrial and commercial assets of the new towns, and if not, why not? Is it true that Mr. Bill Hughes of the CBI has been given a specific role to attract interested parties to purchase those industrial and commercial assets? Finally, is the Minister aware that a fair number of people in prisons throughout Scotland who have been sent there for corruption will feel hard done by tonight?

Mr. Lang: I am not quite sure what the hon. Gentleman meant by his last remark, but perhaps that is just as well.

In regard to local authorities bidding for commercial and industrial assets, we are considering the Widdicombe prosposals on the economic role of local authorities and will make an announcement in due course. I do not envisage a regional council or local authority forming the basis of a bid for a private sector company. That does not seem to be an appropriate measure. A private sector bid, put together by business men who have an awareness of these matters and commercial and enterprising drive, would be more appropriate.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Contrary to the Minister's opening remarks, there is nothing particularly Scottish in this statement, only particular contempt for the Scottish people. The statement smacks of potential corruption and asset-stripping. Will the Minister give a cast-iron guarantee that no tenants of new town houses will have their homes sold to private landlords without their consent?

Mr. Lang: Perhaps I may first be allowed to refer to the point made by the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) about Mr. Bill Hughes. It is nonsense. I am not aware of any reference to Mr. Bill Hughes being involved in the disposal of these matters.

As for the tenants of the housing corporations, we are not ruling out the option of possible transfer to the district council at a later date. However, we are saying that now is not the time to take a decision in favour of that or any other option. The important point is to make the range of options clear to tenants, to increase awareness and understanding of the various forms of diversification of tenure and the possibility of increasing ownership—with 40 per cent. of tenants in new town houses wishing to buy their homes—and to ensure that all those matters are fully explored before final decisions are taken.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The Minister has already admitted this afternoon that the two thirds of tenants who wish to stay with the new towns are to be denied that choice and instead, are to be transferred forcibly to Scottish Homes on wind-up.

Another Minister has admitted that Scottish Homes will be set targets, including the target of disposing of 60 per cent. of any houses acquired within three years. Given that the tenants are to have no choice about staying with the new towns, about being transferred to Scottish Homes on wind-up and about being moved on by Scottish Homes into the private sector, how can the Minister continue to defend the idea that the Government's policies are about increasing choice to tenants?

Mr. Lang: Many tenants of new towns have exercised the choice in favour of private ownership, which has risen from 8 per cent. a decade ago to over 50 per cent. now over the five new towns and to over 50 per cent. in four of the five new towns. Forty per cent. of the remaining tenants have expressed interest in buying their homes. That is an exercise of choice which is highly desirable.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about tenants being forced to leave the development corporation. When the development corporation is finally dissolved, they will not, of course, be able to remain tenants of the development corporation and we have, therefore, provided for Scottish Homes to take over the remaining tenants who have not exercised other options by that time.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Will the Minister describe a little more fully what he means by an appropriate valuation for the assets that are to be sold off? Will it have any resemblance to Lady Porter's valuation of a Westminster cemetery? Will he also describe what impact the proposals may have on the rent that tenants in the new towns have to pay? What impact will the proposals have on the job conditions and pay of those who work at places such as sports centres? The Opposition feel that the proposals lack rigour and seem to provide great dangers for the future existence of many of those facilities.

Mr. Lang: I see no reason why the job conditions should be affected by the change. Rent levels are covered by existing leases and will not be affected directly by the proposals affecting the new town. There will be a value of assets that the market will be able to sustain. I cannot tell the hon. Lady what that market value will be. That realistic appraisal of the value of the property will guide the sale price at the time.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In his statement, the Minister said:

"I know that the corporation staff are anxious to press ahead with these programmes."

Which staff? How does he know? Has any ballot been taken? People working in Livingston are gravely worried about the future.

The Minister also said:

"At wind-up, when stage two is reached, the option of a partial transfer to district councils is not ruled out."

Will he answer the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) about whether each individual tenant has a right to an option?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will know that I and my Department have close and continuing contact with the new towns. It is clear that they are anxious to complete the development profiles. We are seeking to enable them to do that by phasing the wind-up processes as we have arranged. We have made it clear that we are not ruling out the district council as an option for tenants, but we are equally taking the view that now is not the time when there is the need or the desire to take a decision one way or the other.

Elderly Persons (Right to Buy) Amendment Bill

4.19 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I beg to move

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to abolish discrimination against elderly persons in access to the "right to buy" provisions of the Housing and Planning Act 1986 by providing elderly persons with full rights to buy their own homes in local authority or housing association rental schemes, except where the accommodation has been specifically adapted or designed for elderly persons and where no such accommodation has been allocated to persons below pensionable age; further to provide no-fee arbitration by reference to the Housing Corporation in England and Tai Cymru in Wales in the case of any dispute between tenant and public sector landlord on the applicability of the exclusion of accommodation defined as specially suitable for elderly persons.

Especially in the context of the preceding debate, it may seem strange for a Labour Member to seek to introduce a Bill to extend the right to buy. Let me explain what my Bill is intended to do. The purpose of the Bill is to remove discrimination against elderly persons who are excluded by law from purchasing accommodation that is especially suitable for them whole young persons who are allocated identical accommodation can exercise the right to buy although that accommodation was not designed specifically for them. That is illogical, and the Government must face the fact that they have created an anomaly in the Housing and Planning Act 1986. My Bill represents a modest attempt to put that right and to introduce some logic into the right-to-buy legislation.

I hope that the Bill will encourage the Government to face up to the implications of the right to buy in general and to the legislation that contains it in particular. We all have to face the fact that there is an increasing number of elderly people in our society; it is sometimes called "grey power". The size of the elderly population will be doubled and trebled in the next decade. We also need to consider our view of the exact purpose of property ownership and to ask ourselves whether we consider it as particularly suited to young people and as something from which elderly people should be excluded. We must try to avoid the division of our society into a two thirds-one third society, of which we have seen serious signs in the United States and, in the past decade, increasing signs in this country, too. We must avoid at all costs introducing any legislation that would do anything to encourage that.

We must work towards the sustainability of the social housing stock and fluidity of the boundary between that social housing stock and the people who occupy it and the so-called private housing stock, albeit subsidised in a social fashion through the mortgage payment subsidy.

Accommodation for elderly persons poses particular problems. An elderly person's concept of private ownership is no longer necessarily the concept of 100 per cent. equity ownership. The elderly person's sub-group of the National Federation of Housing Associations recently did some excellent work on the problems of the 25 per cent.—75 per cent. equity stake, which is particularly suitable for the elderly. Problems also arise in the exact definition of service charges for elderly persons' accommodation, given that elderly people require many more services than others. They may seek greater security and they may have problems with additional heating bills. All those factors mean that housing for the elderly will not necessarily be identical to the accommodation that is most appropriate for younger people.

The problem will grow and grow. In addition to the increasing number of elderly persons, we have an increasing number of elderly persons surviving for about 25 years after their retirement—about the same time as the term of most people's mortgage. It is not unusual for the elderly to be alive and kicking 25 years after their pension starts to be paid. That means that, in terms of time, at least, they are perfectly capable of paying off a mortgage. Ten years ago, people would have said, "What is the point of a woman of 60 or a man of 65 taking out a mortgage?" But, subject to the person's income, that is now a perfectly sensible proposition.

Most important of all is the increasing concentration of local authority and housing association activity on housing for the elderly. That is the direction in which the Government want their efforts to go. That being so, they must also think through the implications of the right to buy in this area of increasing effort.

An additional consideration is that there are now many people in areas such as mine who cannot get on the housing ladder. One of the ways in which they can do so is if their elderly parents acquire an asset through exercising their right to buy, pay a mortgage and pass it on. Nobody on an industrial wage in my area can start on the housing ladder because there are no houses left at under £30,000.

My Bill attempts to solve some of the incompatible and irreconcilable objectives of the present law. All are perfectly valid bits of social engineering, but they do not add up. My Bill attempts to make them add up.

There are charitable housing associations and local authorities who want to build for the elderly. The Government want to support them, but the market does not. Housing associations and local authorities do not necessarily want to create ghettoes for the elderly. That is another important aspect of social engineering. Flats in blocks built for the elderly are occasionally let to young persons. Immediately that happens, one gets into difficulty. If a local authority nominates a young person into an elderly persons' block of flats, that young person can normally exercise the right to buy, but the elderly people for whom the flats were designed cannot. Jealousy and social discord arise in what was previously a happy community. Elderly people then ask why they cannot have the same right as the young person. The answer may be to refuse to allocate elderly persons' flats to young people. That is covered in my Bill. It restricts local authorities' or housing associations' ability to mix the young and the elderly.

Local authorities and housing associations may say, "We want to build enough accommodation of this kind so that even though some of it is allocated under the right to buy there is sufficient left over that can be rented."

It is now time for the Government to accept that they must consider the consequences of their attitude to the right to buy. There must be a sustainable housing stock. That has to be the first priority. The right to buy, if it is to be a genuine benefit, must be sustainable and not a one-off phenomenon of the 1980s to shrink local authorities down to size—euthanasia for the municipal housing sector. We must avoid creating massive homelessness.

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

If we extend the right to buy, we have also to extend the right to build, or there will not be any social housing. Homelessness and an inability to accommodate the elderly will be the inevitable consequences.

If the right to buy is not to be exercised as a political benefit that is just available to the first in the queue in the 1980s, we cannot exclude the elderly. We had the right to buy mark one—simply the right to buy a local authority house regardless of what the local authority thought. Mark two extended the right to a discount. Mark three extended the provisions to housing associations, prison officers and some disabled people. We have not faced the logic of mark four—why should it be restricted at all? It has to be restricted only because we do not have the right to build. The right to buy and the right to build should exist side by side. I hope that this Bill will force the Government to think through the consequences of the right to buy.

If we are to cease to exclude the elderly from the right to buy, we have to accept that there must be a comparable right to build so that there is a sustainable housing stock. There should be an ability to rent, an ability to rent with a view to eventual purchase, and an ability to rent and continue to rent.

This is a modest amendment to the Housing and Planning Act 1986. It will bring some equity and justice into the provision of housing for the elderly. It removes discrimination in the provision of accommodation for young and elderly people, removes the present nonsensical state of affairs, and raises the issue of whether we are building enough social accommodation or whether the right to buy was simply a temporary political benefit intended to achieve the re-election of the Conservative Government.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Rhodri Morgan, Mr. Paul Flynn and Mr. Frank Field.

ELDERLY PERSONS (RIGHT TO BUY) AMENDMENT

Mr. Rhodri Morgan accordingly presented a Bill to abolish discrimination against elderly persons in access to the "right to buy" provisions of the Housing and Planning Act 1986 by providing elderly persons with full rights to buy their own homes in local authority or housing association rental schemes, except where the accommodation has been specifically adapted or designed for elderly persons and where no such accommodation has been allocated to persons below pensionable age; further to provide no-fee arbitration by reference to the Housing Corporation in England and Tai Cymru in Wales in the case of any dispute between tenant and public sector landlord on the applicability of the exclusion of accommodation defined as specially suitable for elderly persons: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 July and to be printed. [Bill 180.]

Orders of the Day

Finance Bill

Not amended in the Committee (and as amended in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 19

TREATMENT OF CONVERTIBLE SHARES OR SECURITIES FOR PURPOSES RELATING TO GROUP RELIEF ETC.

'(1) Paragraph 1 of Schedule 18 to the Taxes Act 1988 (which contains definitions relating to group relief) shall be amended in accordance with this section.

(2) For sub-paragraph (3)(b) there shall be substituted—

"(b) do not carry any right either to conversion into shares or securities of any other description except—

(i) shares to which sub-paragraph (5A) below applies,

(ii) securities to which sub-paragraph (5B) below applies, or

(iii) shares or securities in the company's quoted parent company, or to the acquisition of any additional shares or securities;"

(3) For sub-paragraph (5)(a) there shall be substituted—

"(a) which does not carry any right either to conversion into shares or securities of any other description except—

(i) shares to which sub-paragraph (5A) below applies,

(ii) securities to which sub-paragraph (5B) below applies, or

(iii) shares or securities in the company's quoted parent company, or to the acquisition of any additional shares or securities;"

(4) After sub-paragraph (5) there shall be inserted—

"(5A) This sub-paragraph applies to any shares which—

(a) satisfy the requirements of sub-paragraph (3)(a), (c) and (d) above, and

(b) do not carry any rights either to conversion into shares or securities of any other description, except shares or securities in the company's quoted parent company, or to the acquisition of any additional shares or securities.

(5B) This sub-paragraph applies to any securities representing a loan of or including new consideration and—

(a) which satisfies the requirements of sub-paragraph (5)(b) and (c) above, and

(b) which does not carry any such rights as are mentioned in sub-paragraph (5A)(b) above.

(5C) For the purposes of sub-paragraphs (3) and (5) to (5B) above a company ("the parent company") is another company's "quoted parent company" if and only if—

(a) the other company is a 75 per cent. subsidiary of the parent company,

(b) the parent company is not a 75 per cent. subsidiary of any company, and

(c) the parent company's ordinary shares (or, if its ordinary share capital is divided into two or more classes, its ordinary shares of each class) are quoted on a recognised stock exchange or dealt in on the Unlisted Securities Market;

and in this sub-paragraph "ordinary shares" means shares forming part of ordinary share capital.

(5D) In the application of sub-paragraphs (3) and (5) to (5B) above in determining for the purposes of sub-paragraph (5C)(a) above who are the equity holders of the other company (and, accordingly, whether section 413(7) prevents the other company from being treated as a 75 per cent. subsidiary of the parent company for the purposes of sub-paragraph (5C)(a), it shall be assumed that the parent company is for the purposes of sub-paragraphs (3) and (5) to (5B) above the other company's quoted parent company."

(5) In sub-paragraph (6) for the words "to (5)" there shall be substituted the words "to (5D)".

(6) This section, so far as relating to Schedule 18 of the Taxes Act 1988 in its application (by virtue of section 137 below) for the purposes of subsections (ID) and (IE) of section 272 of the Taxes Act 1970, shall be deemed to have come into force on 14th March 1989.'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.32 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The purpose of this new clause is to help groups of companies raise finance through subsidiary companies, either by issuing fixed-rate preference shares or by raising normal commercial loans. If those shares or loans carry a right to conversion into other shares or securities, at present the subsidiary company may not be entitled to the normal tax reliefs available to a group of companies. For example, it may not be able to claim group relief, which allows the trading losses of one company to be set against the taxable profits of another member of the group.

In some cases it is right that these tax reliefs should not be available. For example, if the conversion right is into ordinary shares of the company, the economic ownership of the company may lie largely outside the group. In other words, the holder of the preference shares or the lenders may have a large stake in the performance of the company, so, if the company does well, its right to convert into ordinary shares in the company will become more valuable. If the tax reliefs for groups of companies were available in such cases, it would be possible to devise arrangements which would abuse the reliefs to avoid tax. The new clause does not affect such cases.

However, in other cases, the conversion rights do not give the shareholder or the lender a stake in the performance of the company. For example, a loan may be convertible into fixed-rate preference shares, or the conversion right may be into shares or securities in the parent company of the group. In such cases there is no reason why the normal tax reliefs for groups of companies should not be available. The new clause therefore provides for conversion rights like those to be disregarded when establishing the economic ownership of a company for the purposes of group relief. The group relief ownership rules are applied for the purposes of some other tax provisions, and the change will therefore affect them as well.

The other provisions concern the surrender of advance corporation tax by a company to a subsidiary company, the payment of dividends or interest between members of a group, and the definition of a group for capital gains tax purposes.

This change is highly technical. It will not have a major impact on the operation of the tax system. The new clause builds on the changes that we made in clause 99. If the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) recalls, we restricted group relief to avoid a number of artificial devices and circumstances by which the economic control of a group was not where it might have been thought to be. There were artificial devices to create groups of companies to get group relief. In framing clause 99, we introduced some provisions that could harm certain perfectly legitimate operations.

The new clause simply relieves the provisions that we made in clause 99 so that we will not damage genuine commercial fund-raising operations of the type that I have described in my examples. The provision will not damage companies in that situation. It is because we have received a number of representations detailing examples where genuine commercial operations might be affected adversely that we have made these modest changes. However, the new clause will not have a major impact on the operation of the corporation tax system.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I have examined the new clause with considerable care. As the Financial Secretary has stated, it represents a small loosening of the fairly tight provisions of clause 99, which passed its Standing Committee stage with flying colours.

The provisions of the new clause are relatively unexceptionable. However, I have one question. The Financial Secretary stated that he did not expect the provisions to make much difference to the corporation tax regime. Have the Government made any estimates of the possible lost revenue to the Exchequer as a result of this provision?

Mr. Lamont: The cost of the change is likely to be negligible. Both the new system introduced here and in clause 99 will produce approximately the same yield as the old system, but the timing of receipts might be different in individual cases.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 3

Premium Bonds

'No regulation made under the National Debt Act 1972 relating to premium bonds shall be valid unless:

(1) it contains no prohibition on the smallest number of bond units which can be purchased unless that number is less than eleven, or

(2) it has been the subject of an affirmative resolution of the House of Commons.'.—*[Mr. Chris Smith.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Chris Smith: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

From 1 July this year, the minimum purchase of premium bonds for savers aged 16 or over increased from £10 to £100. The new clause seeks to reverse that change, which was made by statutory instrument under the National Debt Act 1972, and to ensure, by means of primary legislation, that such a restriction on premium bond purchase can never be so easily introduced again.

Premium bonds were first introduced in 1956. The minimum purchase required then was £1, which in today's prices was the equivalent of £8·43. The minimum purchase was raised to £10 in July 1985, worth £11.79 at today's prices. The original top prize was £1,000. It is now £250,000. However, the structure of the prize system of the premium bond programme is such that overwhelmingly the bulk of the prizes still tend to be in relatively small amounts. A key point about the threshold that the Government are now seeking to establish is that many of the prizes tend to be reinvested as further purchases of premium bonds.

The premium bond system has an absurdly low underlying interest rate of about 6·5 per cent. It is absurdly low in current circumstances, when the base rate is so high.

[Mr. Chris Smith]

The rate has not changed in recent months and in a recent written answer the Government have refused to consider changing the underlying interest rate for premium bonds.

It is worth reminding ourselves that premium bonds are a mass appeal product with a large customer base. About 24 million people in this country hold them, and there are about 2·5 billion holdings. There are about 2 billion transactions in any one year and the investment totals about £2·25 billion. The product is clearly extremely popular.

It is also worth pointing out that most purchases of premium bonds tend to be small. The Government have tried to disguise that fact in recent answers, statements and press releases, but the truth was revealed in a parliamentary answer to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) on 26 May, who had asked

"what proportion of the actual numbers of all purchases of premium bonds are currently made under the value of £100." —[*Official Report*, 26 May 1989; Vol. 153, c. *808*.]

The answer was about 80 per cent. So 80 per cent. of purchases of premium bonds under the old rules, which will no longer apply from 1 July, will no longer be possible.

Figures supplied by the Department for National Savings to its trade union side are similarly revealing about the numbers sold in the first three months of this year. In January, the number of purchases under £100 was 169,000 and the percentage of the total 81·1 per cent. In February the number was 135,000, a percentage of 80·5. In March this year the corresponding figures were 140,000 and 81·4 per cent. It is clear that an overwhelming number of purchases of premium bonds are consistently lower than £100.

The Government have presented their case for raising the threshold to £100 somewhat disingenuously. In their press statements and parliamentary answers they have focused on the value of the bonds issued, not on the number of purchases. In an answer on 5 May, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said:

"Sales of less than £100 represent only 12 per cent. of the total value of purchases."—[*Official Report*, 5 May 1989; Vol. 152, c. *255*.]

That is the story that the Government have been trying to put across—that this is not important because it affects only 12 per cent. By that they mean only 12 per cent. of the value of purchases; it is 80 per cent. of the number of purchases. Thousands of small savers throughout the country will be profoundly affected by the change that the Government are bringing in.

The Government will claim that they have included a protection for people under the age of 16 or people buying on their behalf. The Department for National Savings admits that it is difficult to judge what proportion of purchases have hitherto been of this type, but the best figures it has been able to supply show that about 5 per cent. of total purchases are made on behalf of people under the age of 16. So the Government's concession for minors is relevant to only a small percentage of purchases of premium bonds in any year.

We advance a number of reasons why we believe the Government are wrong to raise the minimum purchase threshold in this way. First, there is a desperate need to raise the personal savings ratio in the economy. We know that net personal savings are at their lowest since records began. We know that saving has a counter-inflationary effect. We also know that the only method of encouraging personal savings that the Government have so far adopted in the Budget of this year, in instruments brought forward since the Budget and in the Finance Bill, is the massive boost they have given to personal equity plans. The measures that they have brought in for premium bonds restrict the possibilities of saving at a time when it is crucial, for inflationary and macro-economic reasons, to encourage saving.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): The hon. Gentleman keeps on talking about savings and investment in the context of premium bonds. Does he really regard premium bonds as an investment, given that whether one receives a return is a total lottery, and the smaller the holding, the more of a lottery they become?

4.45 pm

Mr. Smith: I shall come to that point in a moment. It is the only argument that the Government have hitherto advanced for this measure, and the simple answer to it is that a premium bond holding is undoubtedly a form of saving and as such it counts in the overall savings profile of the economy. Of course it is not a guaranteed investment. It is a form of saving that involves taking a chance, not an assumption of guaranteed return, but it is saving none the less and we need to promote saving rather than over-consumption.

Our second reason is that there is a need to boost the facilities for and prospects of the small saver. By definition, a £100 threshold rules out the chances of thousands of small savers and investors. I urge the Government to listen to what some of them have to say. The first letter was sent to my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) by a gentleman in County Down in Northern Ireland, who writes:

"My main concern is the new rules for premium bond purchases which gave hope to the worse off or small investor like myself of maybe some day winning a few thousand, not necessarily the jackpot, but this is now being turned into a club for the rich, or the elite."

In a letter to the Chancellor copied to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, a lady in Bromley writes:

"The only reason for doing this obviously is to penalise the poorer members of our society who cannot hope to buy bonds when they are such a price. My husband and I are from the so called 'Thatcherite' generation for whom things are now meant to be so good. We will not be able to buy one of your bonds from 1st July."

That is the voice of small savers up and down the country. By placing the threshold for a premium bond purchase at £100 rather than £10, the Government are making available opportunities for the better-off at the expense of the small saver—the person who puts aside £1 a week; the investor who wins £50 and then reinvests it; and those who live with the dream that one day they may strike lucky with only a small holding of premium bonds to their name.

Our second major argument is that the change will not only harm the profile of savings in the economy as a whole, but it will especially harm the small savers within the economy.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for not having been here for the whole of his speech. I accept that there is some point in what he has said. However, does he not also

believe that the change to £100 may turn a small saver into a larger saver? Those who might have been previously intending to invest, say, £30 in premium bonds will find that they must and, therefore, do invest £100 in premium bonds.

Mr. Smith: There is always some hope when Conservative Members begin to see that there might be some justification in the arguments which are consistently and powerfully mounted from the Opposition Dispatch Box.

In suggesting that the limit of £100 will mean that everyone who perhaps has £20 or £30 to invest will now rush out and invest £100, the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) is assuming that everyone is in a position to do precisely that—but they are not. Many thousands of people want to participate in the premium bonds system in the hope that they will win something at the end of the day, but they are unable even to conceive of investing £100 or anything like it, as the hon. Gentleman suggests that they may be encouraged to do by the new rules.

Thirdly, we are deeply concerned about the whole trend of national savings administration under the Government. Already—about three months ago—rules have been brought in for a minimum £5 deposit in national savings accounts. At the end of last month national savings gifts tokens were withdrawn from sale. It is perhaps worth noting that some two thirds of national savings gift tokens have tended to be used for subsequent premium bond purchases. The whole tenor of Government premium bond advertising in the last year and a half, including by direct mail, has been based on a marketing strategy appealing to large-scale holders of bonds—one suggesting that they have a better than average chance of winning

"a good run of tax-free prizes".

The Government are turning bonds into a lucrative lottery for the upwardly mobile. They are in danger of turning other aspects of national savings into a similar vein. The character and the purpose of premium bonds as an attractive option for the small saver without very much money to invest are being lost in the process.

The Government claim that they have reasons for what they are doing and a number of those were advanced in a brief debate in Standing Committee. The Government's first reason concerned the high administrative cost for small amounts of savings. They say that it costs £2 per person to administer a premium bond application, no matter what its value. Of course, such a statement ignores the statistical probability of winning, which becomes greater the higher the value of the premium bond. Therefore, the likely cost of administering the winnings will increase, too. That statement ignores the massive profit that the Exchequer makes out of premium bonds. The 6·5 per cent. rate of underlying interest gives the Exchequer a healthy profit. It ignores also the cost-effectiveness of the administration of the scheme. There are 1,300 staff employed to administer the premium bond scheme, with its 24 million bond holders. Management costs are 1·1 per cent., which I should have thought was somewhat favourable by comparison, for example, with unit trust costs. Therefore, the Government's argument about the administrative costs of the small investor in premium bonds does not hold water and ignores the key point, which is that, whatever the method of saving adopted, small savings will always be administratively more expensive. That is no reason for abandoning them altogether, but it is a reason for deciding that we must accept the cost of administering small savings, come what may.

The Government advanced the somewhat peculiar argument that they believe in promoting quality savings and that premium bonds are a low quality form of saving. That is where the point made by the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) comes into play. He was echoing what the Minister said on 20 June in Standing Committee. The point is that purchasers of premium bonds weigh up in their minds, when they go out to buy them, the balance of advantage between the chance of a big win and the guarantee of income against depreciation. They decide what form of savings they want to put their money into. They decide whether they want a guaranteed return to protect their money automatically against depreciation or whether having a flutter with a premium bond or two is something that they would rather do than go for some form of guaranteed income. The important point is that it is they who should make the decision. The Government should not make it for them.

The key is customer choice. It is not up to the Government to dictate in a somewhat lofty fashion what is good quality and what is poor quality saving. That is a tawdry argument. It is not for the Government to say that, because there is no form of guaranteed return on premium bonds and that people enter into premium bond schemes thinking that they may have a chance of winning substantially, but knowing equally that they may not, it is a low quality saving and, therefore, they will implement a penal threshold that will prohibit hundreds of thousands of people from going into the premium bond market. It is up to individuals to make their decisions. Until 1 July, that is how the system worked. We are calling on the Government to reverse the changes brought in on 1 July, to stand up for the small saver, and to accept the new clause.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I would not cross the road to buy a premium bond and indulge in that type of flutter, but millions of people like to buy a modest number of bonds in the hope of winning the largest prize that is offered. It is no argument for the Government to say it is a low-quality form of saving.

5 pm

The minimum investment of £1 when premium bonds were first introduced was changed to a minimum of £10 in 1985, which was roughly in line with inflation—though perhaps slightly in excess of it. At the present level of inflation, the minimum investment figure would need to be £12, so the Government's figure of £100 is excessive and would exclude on current figures about 80 per cent. of investors. Twenty-one per cent. of premium bond investors are old-age pensioners, and 19 per cent. of them purchase less than £100 worth of bonds.

There can be no doubt that the Government's proposal will exclude a large number of people who want to make a small investment in the hope of winning one of the bigger prizes. The Government argue that the cost of each premium bond transaction is £2 and therefore it is not worth selling bonds to a value of less than £100. Figures provided in a written answer of 8 June reveal an overall increase in the amount invested since 1985 by those purchasing premium bonds in blocks of £10, £20, £30, £40

[Mr. Win Griffiths]

and £50. The aggregate of purchases individually having a value of between £10 and £50 in 1985 was £26·6 million, but had increased to £34 million.

In 1985, purchases of £10 worth of premium bonds accounted for 5 per cent. of the total value of sales in 1985, falling to 3·2 per cent. by 1989. However, the value of £20 purchases doubled from 0·6 per cent. to 1·2 per cent. Purchases of £30 worth of bonds increased marginally, from 0·7 per cent. to 0·8 per cent., while sales of £40 units fell marginally from 0·7 per cent. to 0·6 per cent. Sales of £50 units of premium bonds also fell, from 5·7 per cent. to 5·2 per cent. However, across all those denominations there was an overall percentage increase. If the Government want to set the lower limit at a figure higher than £10, an appropriate sum would be £20, which is the point at which there has been a doubling of sales over the past five years. A £100 cut-off point can be viewed only in the context of a desire by the Government to cut costs.

An article in *The Sunday Times* of 26 June suggested that the Government are introducing the £100 cut-off point as they no longer need to borrow money through premium bond sales because they are receiving so much into the Exchequer from privatisation and other measures. But if we are to believe the Department for National Savings' annual report for 1987, people willing to invest sums averaging more than £1,000 in the hope of having a good run of tax-free prizes were targeted in a drive to increase investment, which included direct mail.

The evidence is that the Government are encouraging people with £1,000 or more to invest in premium bonds because the Government make a large profit from such investors, but that they do not want to be bothered with the ordinary investor, such as the pensioner who likes a little flutter. Such investors are not to be allowed freedom of choice, which is so vaunted an element in the Government's prospectus for the 1980s.

The Department for National Savings received a large number of complaints about the higher level of minimum purchase. I wonder whether the Minister is aware of the scale of that protest. All the evidence is that people of small means are happy to forgo any interest on their investment in the hope of making a tax-free capital gain from premium bonds. It is not too late for the Minister to think again and to make millions of people much more contented. When one considers the current state of the opinion polls, that aspect is not one which the Minister can ignore. I should not want to do anything that would help him politically, but there is widespread concern that millions of investors will be arbitrarily excluded by the £100 cut-off point, which has no economic or fiscal justification other than the Government's dislike of having to meet the cost of £2 per transaction unless an individual purchases at least £100 worth of premium bonds. I ask the Minister to consider small investors and to accept the new clause.

Mr. Tim Smith: It is a fascinating commentary on the priorities of the Labour party that of all the areas of tax reform that might be thought important, when it comes to starting the Report stage of the Finance Bill, with the opportunity to instigate a major debate on tax reform, the Opposition's choice of subject is premium bonds. It is also a perverse comment on the House. Although the premium bond scheme is important, there are many more important areas of tax reform that the House ought to be debating.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I remind the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. and hon. Friends also tabled new clauses 1, 2 and 6, but they were ruled out of order. They dealt with very important matters concerning privatisation and the amounts that the taxpayer received as a result of sales of public assets. I would dearly have loved to participate in a debate on those new clauses, but they were not selected. Perhaps that is one of the problems about our rules of procedure.

Mr. Smith: The fact that those new clauses were not selected has nothing to do with me. They would have affected only a handful of companies. Surely most people are more keen to hear the Labour party's views about the aspects of tax reform that affect most taxpayers. For example, what does the Labour party think about the reform of income tax? We are not considering that. We are discussing the details of the premium bond scheme.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) advanced three arguments against the changes that the Government recently announced and which took effect from 1 July. First, he pointed out that the savings ratio had fallen substantially over the past few months. That has happened not so much because savings have diminished as because borrowings have increased. Of course, the savings ratio is a net figure.

The hon. Gentleman said that the only measure that the Government had advanced to encourage savings was an increase in the tax relief for personal equity plans. By far the most effective way of securing an improvement in the savings ratio is an increase in interest rates. We have had a substantial increase in interest rates, which has cut borrowing and encouraged savings. The idea that improved tax relief for PEPs has anything to do with encouraging saving is misconceived. The PEP scheme is about encouraging people to invest in equities. The chances are that there will not be great additional savings because of the tax relief for PEPs, but that because of the relief people will reorganise their investments to take advantage of it.

National savings, of which premium bonds form a small part, are part of the Government strategy to encourage an improvement in the savings ratio. It must be obvious that when the Government are running a large surplus they have rather less need than in previous years to have an attractive national savings package. For that reason, I certainly would not want an improvement in the interest paid on premium bonds. If people are content with the present interest rate, so be it. I agree with the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths): I do not think that premium bonds are attractive and I, too, would not want to participate in that scheme.

Are premium bonds an investment? The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury described them more than once as an investment. I can see that they are savings from the Government's point of view, because they contribute to national savings. Putting one's money into a premium bond is not my idea of an investment. The game was given away when the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury described buying premium bonds as "having a flutter" and the hon. Member for Bridgend talked about a "type of flutter". That is how people see it.

One not only loses one's stake but gambles on whether one will get a return. If one has only one or two bonds, the chances of getting any return—*[Interruption.]* It is not an investment. If an investment adviser advised a person to put his money into premium bonds, he might well be guilty of failing to give best advice, as provided for in the Financial Services Act 1986. I am doubtful whether premium bonds are an investment at all, according to the standards by which I judge investments. The chances of getting a return are remote for the person who puts only a few pounds into premium bonds. All that happens is that he sees his pounds devalued by inflation over the years.

Secondly, the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said that he was worried about the effect of the changes on the small saver, and I understand that. I am not sure that we necessarily want to encourage people to undertake this form of saving. It is a bad investment. I doubt even whether it is a good gamble. It is the best gamble for the person who can afford to put in £10,000. Then one's chances of getting a monthly prize are 11 to 10—there is nearly an even chance of getting a monthly prize. Over the year, on average, one will receive 10 or 11 prizes, the value of which will vary. Premium bonds are not a good bet for anyone, but they are a better bet for a large holder. For a small holder, they are not a good bet. Perhaps it would be better if we did not encourage people with small sums, which perhaps they cannot spare, to buy premium bonds.

5.15 pm

Thirdly, the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury made a point about the administration of national savings. The Government are right to be worried about those costs. I suggest that the Public Accounts Committee, of which the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) is Chairman, might consider those administrative costs. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said that some changes have been made recently. I suspect that they occurred because the cost of administering some small accounts did not justify their continuance. The Treasury is right to be concerned about the high administrative cost of small holdings.

We have heard that 1,300 staff are employed to administer the premium bond scheme, and that does not seem unreasonable, given that there are 20 million holders. We have been told that the costs of administration were 1·1 per cent. of the value of the bonds, which probably compares favourably with unit trusts in the private sector. The Public Accounts Committee could usefully consider that issue.

Whether £100 is the right level is a matter for judgment. Usually, in privatisation issues, the qualification level has been rather higher. However, it is true that when the premium bond scheme was introduced in 1957 one needed to buy only one £1 bond. Inflation may well have multiplied that by a factor of 10, but certainly not by a factor of 100.

Labour Members have not advanced sufficient arguments to warrant supporting the new clause. I intend to oppose it.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) said some very strange things. He said that the purpose of the Chancellor's improvements to the PEP scheme was not to attract more small savers and to broaden the number of savers. The Chancellor has said that it was indeed intended to extend saving. He has trumpeted the PEP scheme as an illustration of his desire to extend saving and to make it attractive to more people. It is against that background that we must judge this action by the Government as likely to have precisely the opposite effect and to discourage small savers. I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman for casting doubt on some of the Chancellor's motives behind his PEP proposals.

Then the hon. Member for Beaconsfield suggested that, because premium bonds are a poor investment, the only sensible thing to do is to put more, rather than less, money in: whereas the logic of the argument is that, if they are a poor investment, people should not be encouraged to put a great deal of money in them. If the Economic Secretary were to say to me, "I am thinking of putting £5 on a bet that England will win one test before this series is over," I might say to him, "As a mixture of patriotism and a long shot, perhaps you can consider it." If the hon. Gentleman were to say to me, "I will put £100 on the possibility that England will win one test before the series is over," I would tell him that that would be very foolish. The unwiseness of such a speculation would lead me to counsel a small investment only. Those who rightly argue that premium bonds are a pretty poor bet should be the last to suggest that the minimum investment required be increased.

If it is the essence of the Government's argument that premium bonds are not quality savings, there are a number of steps that they could take. They could, for example, allow people to invest much smaller sums and not tempt them to invest large sums. That is the purpose of the new clause, as it was the basis of our arguments in Committee. If it is a bad bet, with an underlying rate of interest of only just over 6 per cent., none of which may accrue to the investor because he might not win a prize, people should not be encouraged to make a high minimum investment.

The Government could take other steps. They could improve the underlying rate of interest, but there is no sign of their doing so because they realise that they are on to a good thing. They are charming a great deal of money out of a great number of people for a very low rate of interest, which most of the investors never even receive. That is a comfortable arrangement for the Government. Indeed, substantial parts of the private sector might wish that they could follow suit.

If the Government believe that investment in premium bonds is poor quality saving that should not be encouraged, they have another option: they could abandon it altogether. Because of the Government's high rate of return, they will not do that, but they could at least stop advertising it and stop sending out direct mail encouraging people to invest in it. The Government are indulging in rather curious double standards. They cannot both condemn the product and try hard to sell it. Indeed, they are trying to sell it more selectively. They cannot be bothered with a £5 minimum investment in premium bonds, but they want to open the door to the few people prepared to invest £10,000. That would allow the Government to offer the service for very little expenditure. They would have a comfortable return for a minimum of effort.

It is unfortunate that the Government's attitude to a £100 minimum investment in premium bonds is characteristic of their attitude to national savings in general. The £5 minimum deposit in a national savings

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

account was a serious blow to those trying to encourage the habit of saving among young people. Many people simply cannot find £5 at one time. They want the opportunity to save regularly through small sums. The Government's attitude is spreading to all aspects of national savings. If they get away with this proposal, they will probably raise the minimum national savings deposit again and again and shut off many avenues for the smaller savers.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Is not the logic of what the hon. Gentleman is saying that those who have only small sums to invest should not choose premium bonds?

Mr. Beith: I certainly would not advise them to invest in premium bonds. However, as experience has shown that half the population wants to invest in premium bonds, it is not right to make the only way that they can do so be by investing large sums. They may not have very much money and they should be allowed to invest small sums. Indeed, gambling is least harmful when it is neither compulsive nor involves large proportions of an individual's income or disposable resources. The Government are moving in the opposite direction by making one of the forms of investment that comes closest to gambling available only to those prepared to invest large sums of money. They are closing the door against the small saver, and that is particularly unwise with premium bonds.

The hon. Member for Beaconsfield pointed out that the Government do not need to be worried about national savings because their requirements for funds are now significantly lower. The Government have the opposite to a funding problem; they have a budget surplus, so they do not need a great deal of national savings. The hon. Gentleman missed the point about savings. One of the arguments for saving at a time of high inflation, especially with the problems in the British economy during the past 12 months, is that savings divert from consumption. One of the pressures in the economy during the past year has been the consumption of imported goods in the domestic market. It is therefore sensible for the Government to encourage saving.

We want to press the Government on the whole issue of encouraging small savings. If large numbers of people who are not saving could be encouraged to do so, it would have a beneficial effect in the current economic circumstances. The arguments for national savings are not simply those of Government funding; they relate also to the general health of the economy. That applies not only to national savings but to all forms of private sector saving. It is currently in the public interest to encourage saving, even though the Government's need of funding is much less than it was when national savings were first introduced and some of the other savings devices were invented.

Premium bonds are not a good method of saving and I would not recommend them. The Government run the scheme and want to encourage people to participate in it, but only if they put up a large stake. It is little different from replacing a small stake slot machine in a public place with one in which the minimum stake is a very much larger coin—a £1 coin instead of a 20p coin. The likelihood is that that will encourage people to be less prudent when putting money into premium bonds. It is part of the Government's attitude towards small savers that must be changed for the good of the general health of the economy and the encouragement of more widespread saving.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I call Mr. Marshall.

Mr. Taylor: You have made an understandable mistake, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but one which I am glad to say our wives do not make.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon.

Mr. Taylor: I wish to begin by declaring a lack of interest. Having been a premium bond holder for many years, I have yet to win anything and, indeed, can no longer remember where I have put my bonds. That might tell the House something about my character that I prefer not to mention.

Premium bonds were introduced at a time when the Government of the day were searching for any idea that might knock up some savings and help with the national debt. Subsequently, many more sophisticated methods of savings have been developed, not only by the Government but by the private sector. There has been an incredible change in the way that building societies attract private savings. They use many techniques, such as saving on a regular basis correlated with save-as-you-earn option and share purchase schemes. Those techniques have enabled the small investor to put money aside regularly. They provide a much more interesting and, hopefully, fruitful form of investment than premium bonds have ever offered. The original objective of premium bonds, which was to enable the small investor to save simply, is no longer relevant because there are many other schemes through which the small investor can accumulate his savings.

The rate of return on premium bonds is difficult to calculate, so it is increasingly unlikely that they would be recommended by any prudent financial adviser—as my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) pointed out. As the savings market becomes more sophisticated, more and more small savers will be encouraged to put their money into schemes other than premium bonds and there will be a relative decline in interest. Indeed, the Government have introduced new techniques to encourage investment, such as through the employee share ownership schemes which feature largely in the Budget and which involve many workers putting aside sums of money to purchase shares in the companies for which they work.

Those who may not fall within the classic category of small investors are, nevertheless, keen to put aside relatively small sums, and for them the personal equity plans are both interesting and attractive. They answer the needs of small investors and there are major tax incentives for them to adopt those schemes.

Premium bonds are an outdated investment. It would be prudent for the Government to insist on a minimum purchase level because the scheme's administrative costs are high. It is counter-productive if the Government are losing £2 for every £10 subscribed in small units. It does not make sense for the Government to be that profligate on administrative costs. In addition, as I said earlier, if

people wish to have the fun of a gamble, building societies and banks enable small savers to accumulate sufficient money to purchase a batch of bonds.

For all these reasons, the Government are right to consider having a minimum purchase level for premium bonds and the Opposition's new clause asking for more inquiries into the performance and administrative costs of premium bonds is unnecessary. It is accepted by hon. Members on both sides of the House that more people in Britain should save rather than consume and I hope that the Government will introduce more measures to encourage that trend. Future Finance Bills should contain even more incentives for people to put money into PEPs. There should be even more opportunities to reduce the administrative costs of PEPs.

Such schemes, along with employee share ownership, are sensible and desirable objectives for the Government. They should not continue to market premium bonds in small units, as they were originally marketed, which are no longer as attractive as they once were. I strongly support the Government's attempt to reform the area and I shall not support the new clause.

5.30 pm

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): The contributions of the hon. Members for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and for Esher (Mr. Taylor) are ample illustration of how out of touch Conservative Members are with the feelings of ordinary British people.

Let me at the outset declare an interest. I possess premium bonds—£17 worth of them. They have accumulated over the years but I have not won a sausage. I have never come anywhere near a prize. My mother-in-law has an even smaller holding and she has won two or three times, which shows that a big holding is not necessary in order to make a return.

We should lay the fallacy that premium bonds are a good investment for somebody who is well-to-do and a bad investment for somebody who is poor. As an investment they do not hold water. As a gamble, they do. The return on the money put in is in direct proportion to the number of units bought. The chance of a unit winning is the same whether one has 10,000 or 10. A person who increases his holding from 10 to 10,000 increases the risk 1,000-fold. A holder of a larger number of bonds is more likely to win a prize than the holder of a few, but only in proportion to the number held. Not only that, but inflation cuts into one's money. That is particularly true under this Government when the value of a £10,000 holding for a person who is not lucky enough to win a prize, which could well be the case, will drop by £800 this year, thanks to the Government's excellent economic policies.

The Economic Secretary wrote to me on the subject in June after I made representations to him on behalf of several constituents—not necessarily my supporters—who contacted me about the problem. His comments illustrate the Government's reaction to the scheme. He says:

"Like all government departments, National Savings has to operate within a cash limit. So they regularly review their administrative costs to see if sensible economies can be made to make the business more efficient and less expensive to run. National Savings priorities are also affected by the fact that the government is no longer a borrower but is currently repaying debt. Consequently the main need for savings is to refinance borrowings which are due for repayment and to improve the 'quality' of debt. High quality savings are those which people will retain for some time and cannot withdraw to spend at short notice without any financial penalty."

That illustrates some of the Minister's justifications for changing the scheme.

The Minister went on to say:

"Each Premium Bond purchase costs National Savings nearly £2 (a significant portion of which is the fee payable to Girobank.)"

The Public Accounts Committee could well look into that to see whether the Government are getting a good deal. The Minister goes on:

"So small transactions are very unattractive when National Savings are economising on their running costs."

He goes on to raise the red herring of the average purchase price being over £150, but I grant that he does say that lower levels of purchases account for a far higher percentage of the total number of transactions which, as has been said, is well over 80 per cent. of the savings.

The Minister attempts to justify the increase in the minimum amount by acknowledging that there are those who may find saving up £100 beyond their reach, but he says that he wonders

"whether people with only a small sum at their disposal would necessarily find Premium Bonds, which do not offer regular interest but only the chance of prizes, the best place to put their money."

That is the whole point. The person who buys premium bonds is not putting his money away in the expectation of seeing it grow; he is putting it away as a gamble with the hope that he will win a prize as a result. It is a form of gambling, fair enough, which has been legalised or institutionalised by successive Governments over the years. There is no question of the Government stopping it, so far as we know. They claim to be in favour of it in the same way as everyone else, so why debar 85 per cent. of those who purchase small quantities of premium bonds from doing so, turning the scheme into a rich man's club?

It is clear from the Minister's letter to me that he has no concern for the many small investors or gamblers who will be debarred from participation in what is, from the Government's point of view, an ideal savings scheme. After all, it is a long-term method of saving. Despite the fact that people can take their money out when they like, they do not. Like me, they have had premium bonds for as long as 20 years and have left them to gather dust in some corner of a drawer. That is what people do. They do not buy them and trade them in two of three weeks later.

From that point of view, premium bonds are a high quality form of saving. They carry an absurdly low interest rate, particularly under the Government's present inflationary policies which push their real rate of return down to an all-time low. Overall, the scheme is cheap to administer because the costs are one off at the time of purchase. There are no continuing costs of administering accounts as in other forms of saving. It would be much fairer if, when the Minister replies, he were to compare the total cost of administering the scheme with other forms of savings, rather than singling out one detail for comparison.

The Government should tell us what their ultimate intention is. Do they intend to keep the premium bond scheme going or not? Have they looked into alternative methods of purchase in order to reduce the initial cost? Have they compared the overall costs with other forms of national saving? Have they looked at other methods of discouraging early redemption or even charging a fee for

[Dr. Lewis Moonie]

the purchase of bonds, which people might well find an acceptable alternative to debarring them from purchasing them altogether? I suspect that the Government have not.

This is a small matter to those such as the hon. Member for Beaconsfield who have their airy-fairy heads in the clouds. They have no concern for the views of ordinary people and that is why the Government's popularity is sinking faster and faster, week by week. They have a callous disregard for what people think, and ultimately they will pay the penalty for it.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Like the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie), I would cross the road to buy a premium bond. He and I are in the same league. I declare an interest because in about 1981 I bought myself about £10 worth of premium bonds. I have to disagree with my hon Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), because that was the best investment that I ever made. I have not won any prizes, but the pleasure that I have had from notionally spending my £250,000 is out of all proportion to the mere £10 that they cost me. I have calculated that, with my £10 worth of premium bonds, I can expect to win a prize within the next 116 years. If the Conservative party remains in government, health care will improve so much that by then I shall be a hale and hearty 152-year-old. I shall not regret that investment.

I bought £10 worth of bonds because that was the minimum investment at that time. If I were making the same decision today I should buy £100 worth. I would increase rather than reduce my saving. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) mistook my intervention in his speech on that point, although I am sure that he did not do so deliberately. Some people will be unable to afford £100, although luckily, under this Government, they will be fewer than otherwise. Such people should consider whether they should invest in premium bonds in the first place. Perhaps they should consider more sensible investments which would bring them more money, if less imaginative pleasure.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) made an extraordinary speech. He said that people with small savings should be advised not to buy premium bonds but that we should encourage them to buy bonds by making it as easy as possible. It is characteristic of his party, although not usually of him, to advise people both to do and not to do something in the same breath.

Mr. Beith: My advice was simple. People should not buy premium bonds, but if they do, they should not buy many.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I am not sure that I understand that. The hon. Gentleman advises those with the least money to buy premium bonds. My advice to them is that if they are to make the savings that they should try to make, they should make a more sensible investment.

The hon. Gentleman should not ignore the costs of administering tiny holdings such as mine. It is uneconomic to administer my £10 investment. For the Government, mine is a bad investment. While the increase in the minimum investment to £100 is not overdue, it is justifiable and we should support the Government.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): There has been a remarkable consensus in the House that premium bonds constitute a poor investment instrument. If our constituents read *Hansard* and take our investment advice seriously—which they should not, because we are not registered or competent investment advisers—and if they have any regard for the financial acumen of either major party, they will buy even fewer premium bonds.

At a time when interest rates are rising, the opportunity cost of holding premium bonds, as opposed to other instruments, increases, so logically still fewer people should hold still fewer premium bonds. As a result, it is fair to assume that premium bonds will account for an even lower proportion of total savings than at present. I share the surprise of my hon. Friends that the Opposition feel that it is worth putting so much emphasis on this tertiary issue, whether we are considering fiscal policy or aggregate savings and what can be done to increase them.

Several of my hon. Friends have made the interesting point that, like any other savings instrument, premium bonds have a fixed transaction cost. That cost is the same whether £100, £1,000 £100,000 or any other sum is invested. As it is a fixed cost, for relatively small sums it is a high proportion of the total amount being saved and for larger sums it is a smaller proportion of the total amount and may be insignificant.

Against that background, it is curious that the Opposition oppose the Government's new regulations which establish a minimum amount of £100 for any one investment in premium bonds. If the Government do not make such a regulation, the transaction cost on relatively small sums will be too high a percentage. For example, a transaction cost of £2 on an investment of £10 represents 20 per cent. of the investment. Even if the Government paid no premiums in the form of prizes, 20 per cent. of the sum that they received would go on the cost of registering the purchase of the bonds.

5.45 pm

Dr. Moonie: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the initial cost is paid by the bond holder because the bond is not included in the draw for the first three months after the purchase is made?

Mr. Davies: The essential point is that a fixed transaction cost can be a high proportion of the sum invested when the investment is small. The Government, that is to say the taxpayers, lose out because the cost of raising the money or attracting that proportion of national savings is high. The money does not go to the saver but is simply wasted on transaction costs.

It is extraordinary for a party that aspires to manage this country—heaven help us—to advocate a policy under which the Government and the taxpayers lose money in the course of promoting a particular savings scheme and the saver does not receive that money or enjoy a return on it. There is a high cost to the Government and a low return, and, therefore, a low inducement to save. That is not a rational policy for husbanding the nation's resources. I hope that the Opposition will have second thoughts about that policy and consider whether it is a sensible approach.

What can be done about premium bonds? Can any change usefully be made? Several hon. Members on both sides have suggested a possible answer to that question. Premium bonds are a curious hybrid instrument. They are neither a gambling instrument nor a savings instrument. They are not an effective savings instrument.

Mr. Chris Smith: I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman. He has just made the extraordinary statement that premium bonds are neither a gambling nor a savings instrument. Surely they are both.

Mr. Davies: If the hon. Gentleman had listened he would have heard me say that they are neither an effective gambling instrument nor an effective savings instrument. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not deny that I used the word effective in both contexts. They are an attempt at a savings and a gambling instrument, but they are not effective as either. They are not effective as a savings instrument because the return is not sufficiently high and, as I have already said, at a time of high interest rates the return is particularly unattractive. They will not attract more savings, and—as I have already pointed out—relatively low levels of individual unit investment will not make them very attractive to the Government either, because the transaction cost involved in their issue will be disproportionately high.

Premium bonds are not very effective on either the demand side or the supply side: they neither induce households to save nor attract funds into national savings in a way that is cost effective for the Government. Nor are they effective as a gambling instrument, because they are competing against all the other forms of gambling available to the consumer and are structured in such a way that investors do not lose their stake, which means that the potential reward is much lower. Those who gamble on roulette or the horses tend to think in terms of the sum that they will receive if they win. By definition, premium bonds can never compete.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I admit that I have made a very quick and rough calculation, but it would appear from the figures provided in the answer to which I referred earlier that the amount invested in premium bonds worth between £10 and £50 has increased slightly ahead of inflation over the past few years. That suggests that, at a time when savings have been going down, premium bonds have been a relatively successful way for the Government to raise money.

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman should remember that interest rates, both real and nominal, have risen significantly during the past year, for reasons of which we are all aware and of which many of us entirely approve. I do not think that indices running over a number of years are necessarily relevant to a policy decision that must be made now.

I have tried to demonstrate—and I have not been contradicted on this point, although I have allowed a number of Opposition interventions—that premium bonds probably will not set the markets alight, in either the savings or the gambling sector. They are neither competitive nor a cost-effective way for the Government to raise money from small savers, even if small savers are likely to be induced to invest large sums in aggregate across the country.

What, then, should we do about premium bonds? I have no objection to their remaining, although I believe that, for the reasons that I have given——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are now shifting away from that difficult definitive line between the new clause and a general discussion about the premium bond scheme. We cannot engage in the latter.

Mr Davies: I accept that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the point raised in the new clause about the minimum amount that is to be available for purchase at any one time itself raises the question whether premium bonds constitute an effective contribution to national savings. In the light of arguments produced this afternoon, I feel that it would be a good idea for both Government and Opposition to give some thought to whether an instrument could be devised that satisfied the gambling instincts of the British public —perhaps a kind of national lottery, in which the investor may lose his stake, but the return——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman heard me the first time. I repeat that we are discussing a narrow modification to the premium bond scheme, not gambling, lotteries or the premium bond scheme in general.

Mr. Davies: I hope that I have said enough to demonstrate that if the Opposition have any suggestions to make about the Government's new premium bond regulations—which, surely, can be assumed from their tabling the new clause—they should be thinking along rather different lines. That, surely, is a legitimate observation. The course on which they are embarked is not sensible; nor is it targeted towards either increasing savings or ensuring that a greater proportion of the potential consumer demand for gambling facilities is mobilised to the benefit of national savings and the Government's fiscal surplus. It is also not a very effective way of increasing the return to the small saver.

In my view, the new clause addresses none of those important and legitimate concerns. I should like to think that, before the end of the debate, the Opposition will give some thought to them, and consider making a more valuable contribution.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I have been tempted to speak by some of the remarks that I have just heard. We have been presented with what is probably the financier's approach to money—and monetary—matters. I have written to the Minister many times, enclosing letters that I have received which beg me not to allow the Government to change the present arrangements for premium bonds. Our new clause is concerned with the ordinary person's approach to how he should deal with money, how he should save and how he should encourage his children to save, which is probably more important.

I first came across premium bonds when I won £50 in a draw at work. If I had not bought £50 of premium bonds, I would have gone up the road and spent the money. It was very handy to be able to purchase premium bonds there and then, on a whim. I still have them. They were a very poor investment, without a shadow of a doubt: other forms of investment could have made a good deal more. Nevertheless, I had the choice and was entitled and able to deal with it. The increase in the minimum investment from £50 to £100 takes that choice away from many people.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): When did the hon. Gentleman make his investment? Allowing for inflation, that £50 could well be worth the £100 that is now being suggested.

Mr. McKay: Inflation is one of the reasons why it was a poor investment. The point is, however, that at the time it was a good one. Spending my potential winnings gave

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me a good deal of pleasure, because each month I was sure that it was my turn. That is why one-armed bandits make so much money; everyone lives in hope.

My son had considerable savings from his grandfather, who had two schemes. One was to buy a premium bond, and the other was to keep a savings book. Not only did he show my son two ways of saving money, but he encouraged him to save.

People who gamble do not buy premium bonds. However, the bonds allow grandfathers, such as my son's grandfather, to encourage their grandchildren to save in the manner that they think is best. That is important. The people who wrote to me said that they had very little money to pass on to their sons or grandsons but that they could teach them about the value of money in some shape or form.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McKay: No, because I know what the hon. Gentleman will say.

I agree that if we want value for money, we should encourage people to invest their money in other ways. However, that is what people have chosen to do. If I told my constituents how to spend their money they would tell me where to get off—and quite rightly so. Those who have written to me want to be able to purchase premium bonds in £10 units. Why should we take that right away from them? Why should we take away from people who genuinely want to purchase premium bonds in £10 units the opportunity to do so for their sons or grandsons, or even for themselves? The Treasury is using a hammer to crack a nut by taking away from people the opportunity to buy £10 premium bonds. The Government should think again.

6 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McKay: No. To give the hon. Gentleman his due, financially his arguments are right but morally he is wrong. The Government are saying to ordinary people, "We shall tell you where to put your money." I would not have the arrogance or the cheek to tell people what they should do with their money.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McKay: No.

Mr. Quentin Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have not been a Member of Parliament all that long, but am I not right in thinking that a convention of the House is that when one hon. Member refers persistently and critically to another hon. Member he should allow the hon. Member to whom he has referred to reply?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have not so far heard anything that is out of order.

Mr. McKay: If I sat down whenever I criticised or was sarcastic about Conservative Members, I should not be on my feet for very long.

The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) is right as regards finance but morally he is wrong as regards the attitude that is being taken towards the £10 premium bond. We want to give little people the chance to do exactly what they want. However, the Government are steamrollering them into the ground. All that they want to do is to buy £10 premium bonds.

Mr. Quentin Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Do you not agree that for one hon. Member to be accused three times in a speech by another hon. Member of being morally wrong—I repeat morally wrong—is serious and deserves the right of reply?

Mr. McKay: Have you ever had the feeling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of being harassed? I feel that I am being harassed and steamrollered. About 25,000 people sent me here to represent them and to act as the voice of ordinary people. I shall continue to do that. Small savers in my constituency have asked me to put their point of view, and I intend to do so. The Government ought to have more on their mind than worries about the £10 premium bond.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): This has been a fascinating debate, not least because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) pointed out, it has told us about the Opposition's priorities and the general satisfaction that they manifestly felt for the bulk of the contents of the Finance Bill. That is why they have given priority to the precise means by which we make announcements about changes to the value of premium bonds.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) began his speech in a statesmanlike fashion by spelling out the history of premium bonds. I shall not, therefore, have to repeat it now, although it may be necessary later to recapitulate their history. The present position has scarcely been mentioned by the Opposition Front Bench spokesman—that the Government are repaying debt rather than borrowing, net, from the public. In such circumstances, it is appropriate for the Government to reconsider their public finance priorities.

Our national savings priorities should be to improve the quality of the borrowing and the way in which we finance debt. That means relying increasingly, where we can, on committed long-term savings rather than on extremely liquid instruments that can instantly be withdrawn, or withdrawn at little cost or loss to the saver, and that therefore are more likely to increase the liquidity of the economy and the level of consumer spending in the economy.

Mr. Chris Smith: If the Economic Secretary is worried about the instant withdrawal of premium bond holdings during the last 20 years, is he able to say whether the pattern has fluctuated during that period?

Mr. Lilley: I cannot do that. However, £300 million was put into premium bonds last year and £134 million was withdrawn. As well as coming in, money goes out. Every premium bond holder has a legal right instantly to withdraw his money. That is what determines the quality of the saving. One can never be sure that the money will not be withdrawn in certain circumstances in large amounts by large numbers of people.

Dr. Moonie: Is the Economic Secretary able to tell me what proportion of the £134 million was withdrawn due to the death of the holders of premium bonds?

Mr. Lilley: I regret that I am unable to give that information to the hon. Gentleman. If I find any interesting information during the debate, I shall pass it on to him.

It cannot be disputed that instant access can be had to this money. That has always been a feature of premium bonds and the advertisements refer to it. That must be one of the attractions of premium bonds. A considerable number of people have had small quantities of premium bonds given to them, or have bought small quantities, and have then lost the certificates. We cannot base Government finances on the hope that people will lose their certificates.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): My hon. Friend says that money is put into and goes out of premium bonds at short intervals. Is he able to tell me the average length of holding of a premium bond? I presume that he is basing much of his argument on the volatility of this form of saving to justify his case.

Mr. Lilley: I am sorry that if during the brief period that I have been speaking I have already managed to mislead my hon. Friend. I have not said that it is highly volatile. I have said that it is highly liquid, in that everyone has the right to withdraw his money, a right that is not enjoyed with certain other assets. In the management of the Government's debt we are particularly concentrating on encouraging an increasing amount of money to be permanently, or at least for the longer term, committed to savings rather than to easy and ready access. We are not basing it on a particular analysis of the statistical habits of savers. Experience shows that, although money can apparently be stuck in particular forms of saving for quite a long time, there can be considerable outflows in general extension rate money. Our first priority is to improve the quality of the Government's debt. The second must be to reduce the costs. As a number of hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), have pointed out, it costs about £2 per transaction, regardless of the amount of money that is put into premium bonds. Consequently, that must be taken into account when considering the minimum amount that people should be permitted to invest or save in that form.

I have said in the past that only some 12 per cent. of the money raised is in amounts of £100 or less. The Opposition have made great play of that and have suggested that I was trying to cover up the fact that about 80 per cent. of the number of deposits is in sums of less than £100. But that is precisely the point. The cost is roughly the same whatever the amount, so 80 per cent. of the cost raises only 12 per cent. of the money. That should not pass without notice by the Department for National Savings, and we have duly taken it into account in reaching the decision to raise the minimum amount that anyone can invest in National Savings.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury asked whether administrative costs overall were very low. He gave the figure of some 1·1 per cent. of the gross amount invested in premium bonds as the costs every year. That figure is roughly correct, but it is 1·1 per cent. of the total stock invested, not of the amount going in each year. He mentioned the 1,300 staff employed by the Department for National Savings, but quite a lot of additional staff accounting for quite a lot of the costs are employed by Girobank, providing the transaction facilities which represent a high proportion of the total estimated cost of some £2 per investment. The hon. Gentleman also suggested that the 1·1 per cent. was low compared with unit trusts and other investment media. It strikes me as a not abnormal figure for managing investments. I have seen higher and lower in the private sector. It is only right that the Department for National Savings should be seeking constantly to minimise its costs consistent with providing a decent and fair service.

The hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) asked me to give a comparison of the administrative costs of national savings products. I happily do so. The costs for ordinary accounts are on the high side—about 3 per cent. of the amount invested every year. On the other hand, the costs for savings certificates are at the low end of the scale —only about 0·5 per cent.—and likewise for income bonds. The figure for premium bonds is 1·1 per cent. and for investment accounts it is roughly 2 per cent. So premium bonds are roughly in the middle of the spectrum of the Department for National Savings' costs.

There are plenty of opportunities available to small savers to save their money instead of premium bonds if they do not wish to accumulate £100 before putting money into premium bonds. Those opportunities are provided by the Department for National Savings and in the private sector. There are opportunities for a higher yield, less risk and a better quality in other Department for National Savings products. To mention just one within the Department for National Savings' range of products, amounts as small as £5 can be deposited in investment accounts where the gross rate of interest is 10·75 per cent. There are similar opportunities in building societies, Girobank and so on.

Why do the Opposition believe that there should be made available to small savers in particular a form of savings which is risky, which they have described as gambling or a flutter, when Parliament, in its wisdom, has always seen fit to forbid the private sector to provide any comparable product?

6.15 pm

We have thought it wrong that any private bank, building society or other institution should make available to the general public—large or small investor—any opportunity to invest their money and flutter in the interest that money yields. Are the Opposition demanding that that parliamentary restriction, that prohibition on gambling in interest and offering forms of saving and investment where the investor gambles on whether he will receive any interest, should be available in the private sector? Are they asking us to liberalise the private sector to increase those opportunities? I give way to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, if he wishes to reply, before giving way to his more daring colleague.

Dr. Moonie: The Minister and his right hon. and hon. Friends have already provided investors with that prospect in the private sector, in Barlow Clowes, for example.

Mr. Lilley: I shall not comment on Barlow Clowes, but we go to great lengths to ensure the safety of individuals' investments in the private sector. Hon. Members on both sides of the House would wish that to continue. We do not want unnecessary and unwarranted risks to be run by large or small investors, but I still await an answer to my straight question. If it is such a good thing, why do the Opposition still support the parliamentary prohibition on anyone in

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the private sector offering that facility to replace the element of it which is being withdrawn by the public sector? I have received no reply, so I must note the inconsistency in the Opposition's argument.

Mr. Quentin Davies: My hon. Friend has set out a sensible case in the most compelling fashion. Does he agree that it is surprising to hear the Opposition advancing specifically the view that financial rationality is fine and desirable when applied to the investments and portfolios of large investors, but somehow does not apply to the small guy? It is particularly shocking to hear that line of argument advanced by what used to be regarded as the party of the people.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, although I am not quite sure that any of us thought of the Opposition as the party of the people. They have demonstrated a lack of concern in putting forward that argument today about the security, safety, riskiness and yield of small savings by the least well-off savers with the least amount of money available to put at risk.

Dr. Moonie: What is insecure about premium bonds?

Mr. Lilley: The prospect of not getting any return on one's money—that is insecure, and it is the very nature of the asset.

That brings me to risk. In Committee I enunciated with no great clarity the law of large numbers, as I termed it and thought that it was generally known, to the effect that if one invests a lot of money in a risky product such as premium bonds the likely yield has less deviation from the average than if one invests only a small amount. That was disputed by several Opposition Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield stated the position extremely clearly, both in the beginning of his speech, when he put it pithily, and in the numerical examples that he gave of how a large investor will receive a regular series of returns whereas a small investor may receive nothing or a large amount.

Mr. Allen McKay: The Minister is still missing the point on premium bonds. The majority of people I know who have premium bonds bought for them or who buy them themselves only keep them for a short period. Even if they have not won and accepting that they have lost interest, they receive a lump sum which they can invest somewhere else. That is the magic of it. That is what people were encouraged to do.

Mr. Lilley: I will not dispute for an instant what the hon. Gentleman says, although he has blown a torpedo through the point that his hon. Friends were making because they said that the money was never withdrawn or was held for a long period. He is saying that in his and his constituents' experiences the money is withdrawn after a short period.

Dr. Moonie: The Minister cannot tell us whether bonds are held for a long period or not because he does not have that information. However, let us go back to the mythical law of large numbers. I stated clearly that no statistician would disagree that the more bonds held, the greater the chance of winning. However, the amount added for each additional bond is the same. There is no magical way in which the probability increases geometrically with a larger holding.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman referred to the mythical law of large numbers and I saw his hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), who is a distinguished mathematician and probably more so than any other hon. Member in the Chamber and certainly more so than myself, flinch at that reference. The law of large numbers is not a political law in dispute in the House, but part of the way creation has been made. If one has £10,000, the average return each year will differ from the 6½ per cent. average across all premium bonds. The deviation from that average will be smaller than for the little chap who has only £10 or £100. That is the point I was making. If one has only £10, it is all or nothing. For many years there is no return at all, but after 116 years my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) is confident of getting a return. That is what I call a high degree of risk. My hon. Friend may die before then, although I have equal confidence with him in the ability of the National Health Service to keep him alive for that time. My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield made it clear that if one has £10,000 one can expect a prize most months, so the return most years will average roughly 6 per cent. One would not have to wait 150 years before seeing that average achieved.

That is the reason why we do not think that it is a form of investment for the very small investor, investing small amounts which may represent quite a high proportion of savings, that we should go out of our way to encourage and facilitate even to the extent of implicitly subsidising small investors. Those investors are imposing the greatest costs on the system. We do not, therefore, find the Opposition's argument convincing.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) asked why, if premium bonds were such a bad investment, we encouraged people to do more rather than less of such saving. At first sight, he has posed a convincing little paradox. However, there are two points to take into account. First, the return to different investors depends on their tax position. The person who pays no tax will receive only 6½ per cent. on average over the investment, which is the pool that is put aside. Obviously, such an investor could receive more if he invested in a gross product—such as investment bonds which, as I mentioned, provide 10¾ per cent. and on which he would pay no tax. A basic rate taxpayer would get that amount less 25 per cent., which is still more than premium bonds provide. For high rate taxpayers, after paying 40 per cent., 6½ per cent. is not too bad a return. For the high yield taxpayers, it is more attractive—that is why we put an upper limit of £10,000 on the amount put in. We should not make unlimited tax-free investment opportunities available to the higher rate taxpayer. For the basic and higher rate taxpayers, premium bonds are more attractive than for non-taxpayers and, typically, non-taxpayers are able to put in only very small amounts.

Secondly, the risk in large numbers is less, as I have already said. Anyone putting in a reasonably large amount receives a more guaranteed average amount back over a period of years than a person who puts in a little. The large investor, of course, is better able to look after himself and less a matter of concern for Government than the small, least sophisticated investors. That is why we are happy to

let the bigger investors, who make a reasonable return at reduced risk and at lowest cost to the Government, put in money, rather than encouraging small investors, who are making an inadequate return in respect of their tax position, running a higher risk and imposing the greatest cost on Government. That is a consistent view.

One issue raised in the course of general discussion in the country as a whole is whether we are impeding syndicates from operating and preventing groups of people getting together, as it appears that they have done in various parts of the country, to put in £1 or £10 per week, pooling the risk and sharing the prizes. The Department for National Savings has never given any recognition to unofficial syndicates and makes it clear to any who inquire about running a syndicate that it recognises only the registered holder of the bonds—the individual in whose name they are bought—as sole owner. Nevertheless, the department is well aware that many such syndicates exist and it has never prevented individuals from buying premium bonds on a syndicate's behalf. If members of syndicates are keen to continue to buy premium bonds, I can only suggest that they save up to £100 for each purchase, but for many syndicates that would mean making less frequent purchases, although they could continue to operate.

The Opposition also made an important point about encouraging savings. They said that surely it was important to encourage saving and that surely we wanted to see more personal saving in the economy as a whole. We do indeed, but we are in the happy position where it is not the Government who need to borrow those savings. We want to see savings available to finance the investment boom that industry is currently enjoying. That is why in the Budget my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer concentrated his fiscal incentives on improving the private equity plans to encourage savers to put savings directly into investments in British industry. That is where such savings are needed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) pointed out. We need savings, yes —but Government borrowing, no.

If the Government were to boost the amount put into premium bonds, given their requirement to run up a public sector debt repayment of some £14 billion this year, the more they draw in from there, the more they would have to repay of other forms of saving. It would be absurd for us to encourage a lower quality of saving only to find ourselves forced to repay higher quality forms of saving. That cannot be right and would not be sensible. I cannot think that the Opposition have thought the matter through.

The Opposition's attitude to premium bonds has changed dramatically. When the scheme was first introduced, back in 1956, the then Leader of the Labour party, who is now Lord Wilson of Huyton, talked of Britain's strength, freedom and solvency depending on the proceeds of a squalid raffle. James Simmons said that the Labour party had been built up by appeals to the ideals and high aspirations of our people, and that premium bonds were the very opposite of the Socialist principle of putting service before self. Premium bonds were described as a cheapjack idea, and the Chancellor was urged by Dr. Horace King to reconsider.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): The Minister quoted Harold Wilson, who represented part of my constituency at one time. He was wrong on two counts. First, Harold Wilson was not the Leader of the Labour party in 1956 and, secondly, he is Lord Wilson of Rievaulx.

Mr. Lilley: I apologise to the House for my two errors. However, Lord Wilson of Rievaulx was wrong far more frequently than I have ever been, and his views as expressed then were in conflict with the views of the Opposition today. I can only suggest that the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) explains this great volte face and tells us why what was described as "a squalid raffle" is now so important that it should be made available to those who are the least well-off, the least sophisticated, have the least tax advantage in taking part and who cost most to the Exchequer if they invest their funds in this way. I cannot believe that there is a satisfactory answer to these questions and I therefore ask the House to reject the new clause.

6.30 pm

Mr. Chris Smith: Nothing could demonstrate more clearly Conservative Members' sense of priorities and the sort of world in which they live than the remarks of the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), who said that this was a small and trivial matter, and of the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), who said that this was a tertiary issue. We are talking about a matter that is of interest to the 24 million holders of premium bonds. This matter is far more important to most of them than the entire contents of the rest of the Finance Bill put together. If the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding wants to find tertiary issues, he need only open the Bill at virtually any page. He will find tertiary issues aplenty in clause after clause of a Bill that is largely composed of such issues. Premium bonds are not a tertiary issue for the many hundreds of thousands of people who are extremely concerned about their future ability to buy premium bonds in quantities that they can afford.

That is the issue at stake in the new clause and Opposition Members make no apologies for introducing it because it deals with a matter of great concern to many ordinary people who have never been, who never will be and who never aspire to be directors of Morgan Grenfell but who are concerned about their ability to do what they want with their money. Those are the people for whom we speak and it is on their behalf that we have tabled the new clause.

Mr. Tim Smith: If Lord Wilson was right to describe premium bonds as "a squalid raffle," why has the price of the tickets become a moral issue for the Opposition?

Mr. Smith: We are talking about individuals' ability to choose what to do with their savings. That is the issue at stake, and I shall amplify that in a moment.

I want to deal with the points of substance that the Economic Secretary raised. I strongly disagree with him about syndicates. Many people get together in informal clubs—usually at the workplace—to contribute a small amount each week towards the joint purchase of premium bonds which are then allocated to the individuals in the club or syndicate. That is a common form of saving and it is very popular. The change that the Government are making acts powerfully against those people's interests, because at a contribution of, say, £1 a week it will now take a long time for each member of such as syndicate to be

[Mr. Smith]

entitled to receive a premium bond for his weekly contribution. What is possible now on a relatively short timescale will become much more difficult and take much longer in future.

The principal argument that the Economic Secretary advanced was that he wanted to increase the quality of the Government's debt. He said that the important thing was for the Government to rely for their finances on long-term savings and on money that could not be withdrawn instantly. Yet when we challenged the Economic Secretary about the pattern of withdrawals and accruals to the premium bond account over a period he was unable to give us an answer about the long-term flow and long-term stability of premium bond funds. That is the key. Of course, potentially, premium bonds can be withdrawn instantly. Potentially, every single premium bond held could be withdrawn tomorrow if the holders of premium bonds so wished. But that has never happened and it is very unlikely to happen. It is by the overall pattern over a period that we must judge the stability of the financing available to the Government through this form of savings.

The Economic Secretary also said that there were plenty of other opportunities available to small savers and that by removing the possibility of purchasing premium bonds in relatively small amounts the Government were not removing the possibility of other forms of saving, which the Economic Secretary said, somewhat implausibly, provided a higher yield with less risk. Of course, other forms of small saving present less of a risk, but the potential yield from a premium bond investment—especially the yield from a small premium bond investment—is very great. That is precisely why many people want to purchase premium bonds even if it is only on a small scale.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) spoke about his mother-in-law, who he said had won two or three times on a holding of less than £17. My hon. Friend described precisely the sort of opportunity of which those who purchase premium bonds seek to avail themselves. People do not purchase premium bonds because they know that they will get a regular return. They do so because they believe that they might, at some stage in the future, turn lucky and win big. That is why people want to save by means of premium bond purchases. The opportunity—the potential—that premium bonds offer them is completely different from that offered by other more regular and more guaranteed forms of saving.

By introducing the change, the Government are removing that opportunity from small savers. The Government are fond of lecturing us about choice and the need for customers to be able to decide for themselves what to do with their money. Here is an opportunity for the Government to allow people who do not have £100 to invest in premium bonds but who want to purchase some none the less because of the opportunity that it gives them to do so. Here is the Government's chance to restore the position that they changed on 1 July and make available to small savers the chance to buy premium bonds in the way that they wish. The Government have removed that opportunity from them. We wish to restore it to them.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 195, Noes 266.

Division No. 292] **[6.39 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce

Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Jimmy Dunachie.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Rost, Peter
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike

Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I turn to you as custodian of the rules of this House. Until this evening I had been under the impression that any hon. Member passing through the Division lobbies had to do so bareheaded. However, this evening an hon. Member passing through the Noes Lobby was wearing headgear. I was able to ascertain the identity of that hon. Member and can vouch for the fact that that hon. Member had every right to be in that Lobby. Indeed, had the hon. Lady been in any other Lobby, that would have been an even greater surprise to me. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, in your position as custodian of the rules, to admonish the Government Whips and to ask them to educate their Members about the proper behaviour of this place.

Mr. Speaker: I am unaware of any rule that says that an hon. Member should not vote with a hat on. In any event, the fact that an hon. Member casts a vote with or without a hat does not invalidate it.

New Clause 7

Computation of Profits (No. 1)

'(1) In computing the amount of profits or gains to be charged under Case I of Schedule D of a bank carrying on a bona fide banking business in the United Kingdom, notwithstanding the provisions of section 74(j) of the ICTA 1988 any debts falling within (2) shall be deductible provided that the provisions of subsection (3) are fulfilled.

(2) Bad debts fall within this subsection if they arise in respect of lending to third world countries, their governments, government institutions or enterprises operating in such overseas territories comprising sovereign risks, and the Board shall issue regulations specifying the countries, institutions and enterprises treated from time to time as falling within this subsection.

(3) The requirements of this subsection are fulfilled if debts which are considered to be bad and for which a deduction is claimed are formally written off, waived or otherwise extinguished such that they are no longer repayable by the debtor.

(4) Subsection (3) shall operate in respect of debts which are partly claimed as bad as though that past debt were a separate debt.'.—*[Mr Nicholas Brown.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Some Conservative Members, particularly the hon. Members for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), criticised the last new clause on the grounds of its scope. Although it touched the lives of about 24 million of our fellow citizens, they felt that it was a small matter. The same charge cannot possibly be levelled at new clause 7, which seeks to address the problem of Third world debt——

7 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies: As the hon. Gentleman has explicitly referred to me, I should like to correct his misapprehension. I do not think that he could have been following the previous debate with any attention.

The new clause did not affect the lives of 24 million people who may hold premium bonds. It merely affected the lives of those who wish to purchase premium bonds in future in individual amounts of less than £100. There is a clear distinction. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman failed to notice it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have finished the last debate; let us get on with the next one.

Mr. Brown: Quite so, Mr. Speaker. If my attention wandered in the last debate while the hon. Gentleman was speaking, I dare say that I was not alone in that.

This debate relates to Third world debt. The proposition is specifically aimed at relating the tax deductions that First world banks seek from their Governments to debt forgiveness in the Third world. We believe that that is in line with the thinking behind the Brady plan, which aims at reducing existing loans to the Third world, if not an outright tax forgiveness. The difference between our proposition and the Brady proposal is best summed up as follows: the Brady plan relies on the voluntary co-operation of the private sector, whereas our proposals directly link tax concessions to willingness to forgive debt in the Third world.

The problem that we are seeking to deal with is vast and has been dramatically exacerbated by the recent fall in the value of Third world commodity sales. For example, debt service ratios for the African continent now exceed 50 per cent. of that continent's export income. The total current account deficit of the African region trebled between 1985 and 1986, with deteriorating terms of trade, low economic growth and outward interest payments far in excess of inward investment.

The problem is illustrated by countries such as Zambia, where the infant mortality rate has doubled since 1980 because of malnutrition. It is also reflected in countries such as Brazil, in which the infant mortality rate fell steadily until about 1980, when the debt crisis hit. Now 40,000 children die each year in that country. About 86 million Brazilians are on the minimum calorie intake, of whom about 30 million receive less than 1,600 calories per day. Yet Brazil is the sixth largest exporter of foodstuffs in the world. It is a disgrace that old debt servicing has meant a transfer of wealth from the south to the north.

The problem in the poorest part of the Third world seems self-perpetuating. Those to whom the money is owed put forward a range of solutions. The first solution which is attractive to them is tax relief from First world Governments for a problem into which they got themselves. When forced to look at other potential solutions they consider rescheduling of debt, bond conversion schemes and even further loans to perpetuate the debt interest cycle.

The financial institutions of the First world are reluctant to consider debt forgiveness. When they do, they want to consider it in exchange for something. They will consider just about any mechanism apart from outright default. In these difficult circumstances for the Third world, it reflects no credit on the Government of the United Kingdom that the volume of the British aid budget has been dramatically reduced. Britain's contribution during these troubled times has been to ensure that the amount that we spend on aid fell in real terms by more than a third between 1979 and 1987. That decrease has been marked in Africa, for which over the same period real aid has fallen by 26·5 per cent. As a percentage of our gross national product, overseas aid has steadily fallen during the 1980s to a pitiful 0·28 per cent. of GNP in 1987. In

those circumstances, it is no wonder that our Government lag far behind even that of the United States in exploring new and constructive solutions to one of the most intractable problems in the world.

The sums involved are substantial, although banks are naturally shy of revealing the total sums that they regard as bad debt. In 1987, Barclays sought to offset about £713 million against tax because of bad debt to the Third world. The National Westminster bank offset a similar amount —£562 million; the Midland offset £1,016 million, and Lloyds, £1,323 million. As a proportion of these banks' total Third world debt we note that Barclays wrote off about 26 per cent. in 1987, National Westminster 23 per cent., the Midland about 25 per cent. and Lloyds about 34 per cent. In other words, the major banking institutions of this country are moving at a fair pace to offset as irrecoverable debts owed to them by the Third world against their tax obligations to the Governments of the First world. The International Monetary Fund estimates that the amount written off globally to Third world countries as bad debt between 1985 and 1988 was $9 billion. That includes only money written off to the 15 most indebted countries, calculated by debt service ratio.

Our contention is that because First world nations bear a public cost because of the private sector banks' irrecoverable debt to the Third world, the public interest should be represented in the way in which the debts are written off against tax. In theory, at any rate, those written off debts constitute a large cost for First world taxpayers. Had those debts not been written off, the major banks' tax liability would have been substantial and would have provided welcome additional income for the Exchequer. Whether that would have happened in practice may be open to question, but that does not undermine the strength of our case. It is surely in the public interest that the poorest countries in the world, crippled with interest payments and a debt burden that they can never meet, are brought back into the world economy in a way that ensures stability and holds out the prospect for real economic growth and steadily increased standards of living.

As these written-off debts have been offset against tax liability, it is equitable that the British taxpayer should insist that the debt be truly written off. That has the obvious advantage of relieving Third world countries even of the theoretical burden of repayment. In short, this is tax relief for debt forgiveness.

It is no part of our case that the new clause should have universal applications. The scope for tax avoidance on a large scale is all too evident. The banks are large and powerful and some Third world nation states are small and vulnerable. We propose a remedy to deal with the present problem. We are not seeking to encourage an extension of the present difficulties or to set up a vast new tax avoidance industry for a Keith committee to deal with in the early 1990s.

The Third world debt problem was clearly not planned to emerge in the way in which it has emerged, and it is in nobody's interest that it should continue. Our remedy is designed to deal with the existing problem. To avoid creating new problems, it may be necessary to set a time limit on the operation of the relief or on the circumstances under which it may be made available. It may be necessary to set that down more specifically in the resolution. Nevertheless, it is the principle that is important. No matter how reluctant the banks, and probably the citizenry of this country, may be to accept the principle of debt forgiveness, it appears that of all the options open to First world Governments today, and of all the different machanisms that have been suggested for rescheduling, converting into bonds or dealing with the world debt crisis in some other way, by far and away the most effective mechanism is to offset the tax concessions that have been made to the banks against debt forgiveness, and to eradicate at least the current problem once and for all.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I remember some time ago seeing a cartoon that depicted a Mexican peasant, who was faced with a well-dressed American. What was being offered to that Mexican peasant by the right hand of the well-dressed American was a teaspoon on which was written the word "aid". The problem was that the left hand of that well dressed American held that peasant by the windpipe and on the arm was emblazoned the word "trade". That cartoon summed up the position. A teaspoon of aid is offered, but by and large the rich world has the Third world by the windpipe in terms of trade relations. Trade terms are far more favourable to the First world than to the Third world. In recent years it has become clear that trade is not necessarily only in goods but is in invisibles, such as financial exchange. Such trading has increased in prominence in world trade relations.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said, if we were just to focus on what is in that teaspoon of aid for a few moments and considered our Government's record in the past 10 years, we would find that there has been a dramatic reduction in the volume of Britain's aid contribution in real terms and as a proportion of gross national product. As my hon. Friend cited, it was only in January in a written answer in *Hansard* that the Government admitted that aid in Africa had dropped by 26 per cent. over the period from 1979 to 1987. Yet this year the Treasury was able to announce that there was a surplus of £15 billion. One month after that answer on Africa the Prime Minister announced:

> "We now have a higher standard of living than we have ever known. We have a great budget surplus."—[*Official Report*, 28 February 1989; Vol. 148, c. 154-55.]

I am tempted to set against that another comment that she made in a contribution to a book which was called "Towards One World?" which contained international responses to the Brandt report published some years ago. The Prime Minister said:

> "It is morally right that those who can should help the poorer countries to help themselves."

The positive strategy of doing that would be one of debt remission, and that would be a contribution that British commercial interests could well afford.

More recently in 1988, the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs recommended that

> "the aid budget should increase in line with the nation's increasing wealth."

That has not happened, but in the meantime the real problem of trade—the stranglehold of the windpipe—has continued. We are not talking in this debate about industrial capital exchange that is tied up with factories —such as the provision of the processes of production, or agricultural development or provision of infrastructure —but about financial capital. That is the selling of money and turning a profit by charging interest.

I was interested to hear the phrase "recommending debt forgiveness". I am tempted to suggest that we should talk about debt remission, because forgiveness suggests that

[Mr. John Battle]

there is moral responsibility on the borrower only—it is the borrower who has sinned rather than its being the relationship between the lender and the borrower that is wrong. It is interesting that the charging of interest—that form of financial trade—was frowned upon by many traditions, whether Greek, Jewish or Christian, right through into the 16th century, as being usury. The problem for the borrowers is obviously how they will get the money to pay back the high interest that they promised to pay. In recent times often the answer from the bank has been to lend them more money at even higher rates. In practice, that has absorbed the money that those countries have raised from their agricultural and industrial production.

7.15 pm

On 5 April, I tabled a question on the Brazilian debt to the Foreign Secretary. I was informed that Brazilian debt was to be rescheduled over 20 years at interest rate charges of Libor plus 13 to 16 per cent. That would be an extraordinary way of helping Brazil with its debts, because it would put on it an additional burden.

In that answer I was also referred to table 15 of the *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin*, which lists all the Third world debts to the United Kingdom-registered monetary sector institutions and all their branches and subsidiaries. I recommend that hon. Members read that bulletin, because it shows that in Britain banks have some £14 billion owed to them by the least-developed countries. Britain is the world's largest debt holder after the United States of America.

One of the contributors to the World Bank report, which was published just a month ago, was the editor of *The Economist*. In a review of the World Bank report in *The Economist*, he said:

"Because of this lack of savings, they"—

Third world countries—

"need foreign capital to build up their productive investment. In principle, that sounds fine. It makes economic sense for a poor country with good growth potential to borrow abroad. But foreign borrowing can be risky. In the 1980s many poor countries ran into crippling debt troubles because they had borrowed too much in earlier years, and because exchange rates and interest rates moved against them."

That is the context in which Third world countries have been borrowing.

The IMF in September 1987 issued a statement celebrating five successive years of growth in the world's economies, but I would have to say that that was unequal development and growth, because in that same period there was an escalation of the debt crisis wreaking havoc on the economies of the debtor nations. In other words, I would suggest that the successes of the industrialised countries have come about on the backs of the developing ones, whose incomes in real terms have declined by 30 per cent. in that period.

The injustice is that we now have a world in which the poorest countries are subsidising the wealth of the richest countries. That may seem a far cry from representing our constituents in Britain, but if we apply it a little more particularly, it appears that the credit card boom in Britain today is built on the backs of the interest repayments to our banks by the Third world countries. All their foreign exchange is being used to service those debts. The revenue that they earn on export sales has to be returned to United Kingdom and United States banks.

Since 1982 the poorer countries of the south have regularly transferred in excess of $30 billion to their rich creditors in America and Britain. Last year that transfer rose to $43 billion. In other words, it absorbed more than 5 per cent. of the entire gross domestic product of some of the world's most impoverished countries. Brazil, which owes $110 billion in foreign debts, is the world's largest debtor nation after the United States. Brazil pays 10 per cent. of its gross national product in interest on its debts. We must ask how on earth Brazil can restructure its economy, agriculture and industry, so that it can tackle issues such as the wasting of its resources by selling wood from its rain forests, which Brazil must do to enjoy the export earnings that will allow it to repay its debts to banks in Britain and America.

Mexico's foreign debt totals more than $100 billion, or 25 per cent. of its gross domestic product, yet Mexicans earn an average of less than one dollar per hour. They would have to work for 100 billion human life hours to repay Mexico's debt to the rich world. Developing countries have managed to sustain their debt repayments only by cutting imports, squeezing consumption and cutting back on public expenditure. Consequently, per capita income in Latin America has fallen by 10 per cent. since 1982 and investment has collapsed. Michael Manley commented some time ago that for a developing country to make progress in such conditions is like trying to climb up an escalator that is moving down.

The price of adjusting to the debt crisis has been borne primarily by the poor, which is reflected by increasing levels of poverty, malnutrition and infant mortality. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East referred to the 40,000 children who die each year in Brazil. In reality, they are paying Brazil's debt repayments with their shortened lives. Commodity prices have dropped dramatically in the last decade. In the past few days, the failure to settle the international coffee agreement has caused the value of coffee crops to fall daily. Countries that depend on such crops suffer not only a lack of export earnings and of economic growth but enormous debt burdens. Argentina owes about $35 billion to commercial banks and has paid about $100 million in interest since April of last year. Yet Argentina is already $3 billion in arrears with its interest payments.

One of the privileges of being a Member of Parliament is that one meets representatives of many other parliaments. Recently, I had the honour to meet visitors from Ecuador, who explained that that country could not repay its debt interest because Ecuador is dependent largely on its oil revenues to do so, and they asked how many British Members of Parliament knew that the recent earthquake in Ecuador broke oil pipelines and reduced the country's revenue. Ecuador is now two years behind in repaying its $6 billion debt. Peru has made no repayments since 1985 and has a $5 billion debt.

Until recently, of the Latin American countries having the largest dollar debts, Mexico, Colombia and Chile were able to maintain their repayment commitments. However, in the last week the international financial press has reported that Brazil has stopped making its debt repayments on 4 July because it can no longer afford to service it.

There have been two suggestions for dealing with the Third world's debt problems. The first is rescheduling debts but in practice that only means new loans that will worsen the problem in the long term. The second suggestion is that the countries concerned should default. However, in practice when non-payment occurs, it dries up credit and the countries involved are put on an international credit blacklist so that they cannot make any further progress. Last March, the United States Treasury Secretary, Mr. Nicholas Brady, devised a plan to tackle the debt crisis through a complex programme of so-called voluntary debt relief measures. Banks were urged to exchange existing debts for other assets such as equity in Third world countries or Government bonds at lower interest rates. To sweeten the pill, those bonds were said to be guaranteed by the World Bank and by the International Monetary Fund, to reassure banks that future repayments would be honoured.

It was envisaged that the World Bank and the IMF would provide Third world Governments with resources to finance the proposed debt equity swaps. In practice, with Third world debt being traded at less than half its value, and with private banks having undertaken massive provisions to cover themselves against losses, it seems absurd that Third world Governments should now be required to meet their past obligations in full. The reality of the situation was dramatically illustrated when, in Argentina recently, the Brady initiative was marked by violent rioting against austerity measures intended to met the IMF's repayment conditions.

As to the measures taken by the banks to cover themselves against losses, the *Financial Times* reported this week that the Bank of England is reviewing its credit scoring system for British banks to cushion them against possible loans to debtor countries. Known as the central bank matrix system, it is based on whether the borrower's interest payments are up to date and on whether the country has an IMF programme—and a country that does can score highly on the matrix. The system is also used by the Inland Revenue as a guide to the provision that should be made for tax allowances against such borrowings. The difficulty is that those provisions are too limited, so that proposal has not taken off. The matrix system itself is holding banks back from changing their approach.

To return to the Brady proposals, the Bush Administration has been concerned for some time to establish a coherent international debt strategy, because the debt crisis is viewed internationally as posing a threat to the United States security interests overseas. The fundamental flaw in the Brady proposals is that they do not tackle the central problem of funding future developments and of securing new lending. Four years ago, the Baker plan was scuppered precisely because of the inability of Governments to persuade commercial banks to provide new funds for future developments. Although one must prevent new loans from being siphoned off to pay interest on previous loans, debt relief alone will not solve the problem. Halting the transfer of resources from the southern to the northern hemisphere does nothing to bring about long-term development.

At current interest levels, the $70 billion debt reduction proposed by Brady will save developing countries only $2·3 billion per year in repayments. To make a significant impact on the current negative transfer of resources, a realistic strategy of debt remission is needed. It is worth remembering the Monday last October when the stock exchange collapsed and $100 billion was wiped off share values. That showed that the concept of debt remission is not an impossibility or an impracticable option. Banks —particularly in Britain—can afford to write off debts.

In reply to a recent written question from my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), the Economic Secretary to the Treasury made it clear that the Third world debt crisis is over for the United Kingdom banks, as the money they have on loan to developing countries is now only one third of what it was five years ago as a proportion of the banks' capital. Loans to highly indebted Third world countries were 65 per cent. of the high street banks' capital last year. In 1984, the figure was 179 per cent. In other words, if all the Third world borrowers defaulted simultaneously, British banks would not be made bankrupt. Therefore, they are in a position to do something about Third world debts. Meanwhile, they refuse new loans to Third world countries.

In the past year, the Economic Secretary's figure of 65 per cent. could have been reduced to 44 per cent., if allowance is made for the banks' own provisions against bad debts. The figures clearly show that substantial debt reductions can be afforded by British banks.

John Denham, an international debt expert, wrote in this month's issue of the magazine published by the World Development Movement:

"Broadly speaking, they"—

the banks—

"could waive a third of developing country debt without incurring further losses."

Meanwhile, as was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, the burden of foreign debt servicing remains. Argentina alone owes the Midland bank £2·9 billion, Lloyds bank £2·3 billion and Barclays bank £1·2 billion. Despite the Brady proposals, commercial banks have been reluctant to make the necessary concessions to debtor countries, although those banks have been in their healthiest state for years. Even in America, there has been talk of resorting to legislation to force the banks to be more forthcoming.

Large-scale debt cannot be addressed by suggesting further indebtedness. It requires structural solutions to increase resource flows from the north to the south and to improve the productive capacity of Third world economies. Our new clause provides an incentive to encourage banks to write off their debts to developing countries and contribute positively to enabling Third world countries to move towards sustained growth. The debt crisis cannot be contained by indefinite tinkering and rescheduling of old debts.

The Brady proposals do not go far enough. If the new clause is accepted, it will enable the Government, at the meeting later this week of the economic summit in Paris, to present a practical example of how countries in the rich world can restore basic justice in relationships between the north and the south.

7.30 pm

Mr. Tim Smith: I share the concern expressed by Labour Members about the debt burden of Third world countries. There is no doubt that the cost of servicing the debt has become so great that it is often crippling and subsumes a large proportion of the revenue of less developed countries. We should examine every way of securing a situation in which they are relieved of a large part of the cost of servicing their debt.

[Mr. Tim Smith]

I welcome the initiative taken by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to reduce the debt burden of the poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa. I also welcome the initiative taken by Treasury Secretary Brady —to which the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) referred, even though he felt that it did not go far enough. Such initiatives are welcome and can help. I understand that we are close to reaching an arrangement to help Mexico, which is one country with large debt burdens hanging over it.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) cited the figure for the four clearing banks in 1987. Not only the clearing banks, but the Export Credits Guarantee Department had to write off a great deal of debt, which will in due course fall directly on the taxpayer. I am not clear precisely how the new clause will help the less developed countries and I am concerned about the underlying taxation principles. I see no justification for treating one category of debtor differently from another.

For tax purposes, we say that a person can have tax relief if he has a bad debt on his hands and there is no prospect or considerable doubt about the prospect of recovering the debt. It is not sufficient to make a general provision—one must specify the debtors for which one is making the provision. Tax relief is not automatic even then, because the Inland Revenue will consider carefully the provision made. We can take it that the Revenue has done that in the case of the clearing banks, although my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary cannot tell us about the specific position of individual banks because that would breach taxpayer confidentiality. My point is that it does not necessarily follow that, just because a bank makes provision in its accounts, it necessarily gets tax relief.

I understand, and have considerable sympathy with, the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East. Why would it be right to make a distinction between debtors who happen to be less developed countries and all other types of debtor to banks or any other trading concern? What practical help would the new clause give less developed countries?

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I tried to deal with that point towards the end of my speech. I have said that this is a specific measure designed to deal with a specific and unique problem. The hon. Gentleman has asked what help the new clause will give those nations. The answer is that it will free them of the obligation to pay continuing interest on their debt or to repay the capital sum. The debt will be written off, or forgiven. It will no longer exist.

Mr. Smith: I see. It is a hypothetical position and there is not much point in debating whether it will happen. The assumption is that the banks will adopt the proposals in the new clause, take the tax relief and permanently write off the debt. Obviously, the hon. Gentleman thinks that that will happen if we accept the new clause and that that is the right thing to do.

Although I have considerable sympathy with much of what has been said, I have doubts about making distinctions between categories of debtors. Unlike the hon. Member for Leeds, West, I believe that anyone who has borrowed money—I do not care who it is—has a moral obligation to repay it. Perhaps it was wrong to lend those countries the money in the first place. If the banks felt that there was no prospect of the money ever being repaid, perhaps that was not the right commercial judgment to make, but I should not like the new clause to give the signal that there was no obligation to repay the debt, because that would not be the right signal to give. Although I have considerable sympathy with the motive behind the new clause, I have doubts about whether it would be wise to adopt such a distinction in practice.

Mr. Beith: There are specific reasons why it is a reasonable and wise proposition that there should be some remission of debt to Third world countries. Much of that reasoning lies in the prospects for any stable economic development of those countries, which are wholly destroyed by the interest rate burden that they are now carrying, and the prospect of a future world financial and trading system in which they can readily participate. It is unrealistic to treat developing countries' debts as though they were the same as the banks' other bad commercial debts at home. We are talking not about individual companies that may have gone or may go bankrupt but about countries and peoples, many of them in grinding poverty.

What is most alarming about the Third world debt position is that, from the narrow point of view of the western nations, the problem is much less serious than it was, but from the perspective of those living in the countries with the heaviest debt, the problem is as serious as it ever was. The fact that the danger to us seems to be receding suggests that it will be addressed with decreasing urgency. So long as it was seen to be a serious problem for the Western nations and their banks, it was regarded as something about which nations had to get together and worry. I am alarmed that the more it seems that the West no longer has a problem, the less the issue will be addressed when it is still so alarming for those who live in Third world countries.

The Chancellor said:

"The danger of a systemic collapse of the banking system has been averted".

That must be so. There is plenty of evidence to show that the exposure of the banks has been dramatically reduced. Net financial flows to the Third world have fallen from $67 billion in 1982 to $16 billion in 1988. The commercial banks have been substantial beneficiaries of that collapse. Although their cash exposure has increased, their exposure as a percentage of equity has been halved over the same period. We have negative financial flows to the Third world. We have an outflow of funds that is financing the economic development of the western world at the expense of those countries most desperately in need of sustainable development.

The new clause seeks to deal with the position of the commercial banks, which in the United States and in Britain have already benefited substantially from official sources. Most new lending between 1983 and 1987 was from official sources such as the development banks—for example, the International Monetary Fund—and during that time about one third of the interest payments made by highly indebted countries was covered by new lending. There was an $18 billion public sector subsidy to the banking sector because the new lend was actually paying for the interest on the old loans—certainly 15 per cent. of the interest on loans held by commercial banks.

That new lend from development banks and other official sources has reduced the banks' share of the

indebted countries' foreign debt from 67 per cent. to 56 per cent. The percentage involvement by commercial banks in Third world debt has been reduced by substantial public sector intervention. In most creditor countries, the banks have received some sort of tax relief on their provisions against Third world debt, even though the loans have not been cancelled or written down. In some cases, the loans continue to be serviced in full. The commercial banks are emerging reasonably comfortably from what at one time appeared to be a dangerous position. Following considerable public sector aid, the world banking system appears to be capable of surviving all the debt problems. However, the Third world nations and their peoples are still suffering from the enormous burden of interest payments and they have no prospect of debt repayment.

We should be seeking ways to involve commercial banks, through the public sector, in various forms of debt remission, related—as some inevitably will be—to structural adjustment and changes in policies, as has happened as a result of the IMF's activities. It must be part of the Government's programme of measures to involve the commercial banks more closely in debt remission.

The new clause is a genuine attempt to achieve that aim. If the Government can suggest a better way, we should be interested to hear about it. What we want to hear today is that the Government are prepared to get together with commercial banks to seek the remission and cancellation of a significant part of the debt burden.

Mr. Quentin Davies: I am rather concerned about the Opposition's evident intellectual muddle in proposing the new clause to the House. It might be useful if I threw a little light on at least three of the Opposition's major confusions. The first confusion forcibly to strike anyone reading the new clause is that of terminology. It suggests that debts

"for which a deduction is claimed are formally written off, waived or otherwise extinguished such that they are no longer repayable by the debtor."

The implication is that all three options are either progressions of the same thing or more or less equivalent, yet in reality they are quite different concepts. To write off or write down a loan is to decide, in all prudence, that it is sensible to make a provision because it is likely that all or part of the loan will not be recovered, at least on the terms on which it was originally lent. As my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) said, it has been this country's sensible system, where a bank or any other business makes a specific provision that can be justified as the sort of prudential provision that a business should make, that the Inland Revenue accepts that as a reduction in taxable profit.

That is different from waiving or extinguishing a loan. Waiving means that a claim on the borrower is forgone by the lender. The lender could easily decide to write down a loan and provide against it without that making the slightest difference to the force of his claim on the borrower. That is a vital distinction which is blurred by the clause. Indeed the way that the clause is drafted implies that the draftsman was not even alive to that essential distinction.

Even more serious than the confusion of terminology is the Opposition's moral confusion. The best example of that was shown by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), who objected to the phrase "forgiving debts" on the ground that the implication was that the borrower had incurred some moral obligation when he first took out the debt. The hon. Gentleman thought it iniquitous that a borrower should have any moral obligation.

7.45 pm

Mr. Battle: I wish to correct the hon. Gentleman. I objected to the word "forgiveness" because it implied that the moral obligation was only on one side and that no reference was made to the fact that the lender could also have moral obligations, which might include the rate at which he lends money.

Mr. Davies: Any lender has the considerable obligation of prudence. Where the lender is a bank, the shareholders and depositors of which are the general public, the directors have an important fiduciary responsibility. I do not mind conceding that a number of major banks made serious professional errors in the 1970s in the lending policies that they pursued in the Third world and elsewhere. None of that in any way reduces, and must not be taken to do so, the moral obligation of any borrower —whether a country, a corporation or an individual—that is assumed when the debt is undertaken, a loan agreement signed or a bond issued. It is morally dangerous, as well as potentially carrying the most unfortunate and damaging practical consequences, if there is for one moment any doubt about that fundamental principle.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the many millions of people who would be affected by the new clause cannot read confused terminology? They are interested in the way in which they have to lead their lives, and they are living in great poverty and deprivation. The debate is about human beings and about how Britain, as a rich country, can help the poor, struggling countries. What are the hon. Gentleman's suggestions about ways in which we could respond positively to the problems that we both know exist in such countries?

Mr. Davies: Within the constraints of order, I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman's points later in my speech.

If we are at all serious about this matter, the House should accept that it is absolutely fundamental that anyone who takes on a debt incurs a moral obligation to repay it and to conduct his affairs in a way that, as far as is possible, puts him in a position to repay that debt. If we forget that principle we not only do a disservice to lenders, but do a terrible disservice to borrowers because we undermine one of the vital mechanisms by which resources are cycled from savers to borrowers or from surplus countries to deficit countries. The consequences for humanity of undermining or seriously damaging that mechanism, which would happen if we accepted the Opposition's argument, are incalculable.

That is not the end of my story because a third and important confusion has been displayed today by the Opposition, and that is an economic confusion. It is a confusion in properly identifying the different economic interests.

The burden of the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) in support of new clause 7 was that as the taxpayer incurs a cost when banks can reduce their taxable profits by virtue of provisions against bad debts that are accepted by the Inland Revenue, the taxpayer should have some countervailing benefit which would be that the debts

[Mr. Davies]

would be forgiven—to use the phrase which the hon. Member for Leeds, West dislikes. In other words, that implies that there is some conflict of interest between banks and the taxpayer in how those debts are to be treated if they are written down, and whether the claims on the borrowers are waived.

The Labour party's position is that there is such a conflict of interest. I put it to the House seriously that there is no such conflict of interest, because the taxpayer shares exactly the same interest as the depositor or shareholder of a bank in maintaining the claim. If that claim can ultimately be made good and the debt is ultimately serviced and repaid, not only can the bank write back that amount to profits, but those profits will be taxable and the taxpayer will gain his full due proportionate benefit in due course. There is that fundamental error in the Labour party's position and it is important that the debate should not proceed without its having been identified.

I am not insensible of the need to think carefully about how we can better structure the capital flows in the world, including the capital flows between the OECD area and the Third world. There is no question but that in contrast with previous periods there was a greater distortion in those capital flows in the 1970s which led to many of the problems with which we live today.

The period before 1914 was characterised by substantial net capital outflows from the developed countries to what we would now call the Third world—Latin America, Asia, the Russian empire and so on. In contrast to that period there was an extraordinary phenomenon in the 1970s when almost the total sum of capital flows went through the banking market and virtually none went in the form of private debt through the bond market or through the equity market in the form of direct industrial investment or portfolio flows. That was a distorted flow and it means that the Third world has had a distorted portfolio of indebtedness and the OECD countries have a distorted portfolio of Third world assets which is in the interests of neither party.

What does one do about that.? One creates conditions in which it is possible for deficit countries to exploit other forms of capital, particularly to attract private debt to the bond markets and equity flows in the form of direct investment or portfolio flows. A small number of Third world countries have achieved that. Malaysia and South Korea are pertinent examples. They have not only thrived and prospered—they have been models of economic success—but they have not had the problems to which we are referring today and have not had to write off any of their bank debt.

The remedy is there. It is important that we make it clear to Third world countries that the solution largely lies in their hands and that if they create the conditions in which those flows are attracted a great deal of the problem will automatically be solved. But there is one thing that we shall not do. We shall not do a good day's work for the Third world, for investors in Britain or for the future prosperity of the globe if we live in the Alice-in-Wonderland world of financial illusions and make-believe which the Labour party currently appears to inhabit.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) made a number of references during his remarks to conflicts of interest and other remarks that were relevant to banking. I note from the Register of Members' Interests that the hon. Gentleman is a consultant to Morgan Grenfell, merchant bankers. Would you confirm, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the entry in the register in no way lifts the obligation on hon. Members to declare a relevant interest during the course of their remarks? I hope that in future the hon. Gentleman will make clear his direct interest when contributing to debates such as this.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Madam Betty Boothroyd): I confirm that it is for an hon. Member to declare his interests. I am sure that if the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) has such an interest to declare he will do so on a future occasion.

Mr. Quentin Davies: I have declared an interest on many occasions, including in Committee. The fact that I was a director of Morgan Grenfell until fairly recently, and am now a consultant to the firm, was referred to earlier this afternoon. Therefore, it seemed otiose to refer to it again lest it was interpreted as a plug for a particular financial institution.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the House is much obliged.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): It often happens in the House that hon. Members preface their speech by saying that they hope that they will be excused if they do not follow the previous speaker. I should like quietly to follow the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies). I listened intently to his speech and I shall send a copy of it in *Hansard* to Morgan Grenfell to ask whether it represents its point of view. It is a matter of some seriousness if some of the great merchant banking houses in Britain share that view. I know merchant bankers who are a great deal wiser than the hon. Gentleman and who understand the desperate situation in South America that we are often talking about.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) raised the question of morality and he received a legitimate, sensible and calculated answer from the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith). It happens that I believe in a degree of fiduciary responsibility, because otherwise the world does not work. But is not there an obligation on the part of lenders? When some institutions in the West were awash with money much of the lending to Brazil was irresponsible.

I had the good fortune to go to Altimera, at my own expense, with Friends of the Earth, and then to talk to people in the Brazilian Government. Like the hon. Member for Beaconsfield. I speak with some knowledge. Is it responsible for the West to lend huge sums of money for nuclear power stations? I happen to be unashamedly pro-nuclear, but it is not acceptable for us to lend enormous sums for power stations that do not work. The three power stations between San Paolo and Rio, one of them made by Westinghouse and the other two basically by Siemens, are not working properly. That is no way to treat Brazil with its problems.

If we do nothing, the result will be simple—the rain forests will go. It is no good talking about keeping the rain forest if we adopt the general attitude of the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding that we cannot have our cake and eat it.

We must be clear about the view of Morgan Grenfell. I want to ask the Economic Secretary a direct question. It so happens that when I was in Brasilia a lunch was given by the excellent British ambassador, Michael Newington, physicist and many other things, for Kit McMahon, an old friend of mine from the Bank of England in the 1970s when he used to brief me for the budget committee of the European Parliament. Let me say openly in the House that I think that he has been greatly attacked, as has Jeremy Morse, for being "callous" about the rain forest. I am sure that, in his personal capacity, Kit McMahon is as concerned about the rain forest as I or any other Opposition Member—as is Jeremy Morse. I criticise neither the chairman of Lloyds bank nor the chairman of the Midland bank.

8 pm

I should, however, like to ask the Treasury a question. On his return from Brasilia, Kit McMahon talked at some length—if not to Ministers, at least to officials—about practical ways of alleviating the debt problem. He had been accompanied by senior debt advisers from the Midland bank. My first question is, what has been the result of the McMahon mission? Is there anything that the House can be told?

As a result of the initiatives of the hon. Members for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) and for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) and other officers of the Latin American parliamentary group, I met over lunch—and subsequently—the Ecuador ambassador, Senor de Correa. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West gave a striking example of the results of the many earthquakes in the area: after one of them oil pipelines were cut, and it became difficult to repay the debt.

This is my second question: have the Government any contingency plans for what might be called "hiccups", when for one reason or another it becomes difficult to pay debt in the short term? It is the old moratorium problem. Unless we do something, there will be a simple consequence: the Japanese will give Ecuador money for fishing round the Galapagos Islands, with terrible consequences to the ecology of that unique archipelago.

Incidentally, we should understand that the huge Green vote in the European elections did not necessarily represent an endorsement of every aspect of Green policy. It was about something else; it registered a general unease about the problems described so excellently in "The Fragile Earth" and other programmes on all four main television channels.

My third question is this: is the Minister able to report on the success of the mission to Brasilia undertaken by the Minister for Overseas Development—the Patten mission? As one who has secured Adjournment and Consolidated Fund debates on rain forest problems, I am led to believe by what I read and hear that the Minister did extremely well in Brasilia. I happen to share the view of a leader in *The Times* that the way to go about such matters is through quiet diplomacy. If a British Minister has done well, I feel that it is up to Opposition Members to say so. That is my view until such time as the Minister can report back in detail.

I should, however, like to know under what Treasury guidelines the right hon. Gentleman reached last week's agreement. I say that as one who was invited by the Foreign Office Minister—as were a number of others—to meet the British ambassadors to South America when they were in London last month. They were extremely cognisant of the problem.

That brings me to my fourth question, which concerns the Paris summit. What will be the Treasury's view of the general concept of debt-for-nature swaps? *The Times* leader of 6 July, quoted so approvingly by the Prime Minister at today's Question Time, states:

"Brazil's own newly-minted environmental scheme for the Amazon, launched last April under the nationalistic slogan 'Our Nature', has been widely criticised as a public relations exercise. It includes new forest reserves and nature parks, forest guards, and a much-needed new soil map, and has temporarily suspended subsidies for logging and ranching. Land reforms are proposed to encourage small farmers to settle in the more fertile scrublands of central and west Brazil.

But the funds to match the plan are lacking; and it was accompanied by cuts in the budgets of the two major Amazon research institutes. Brazil's difficulty in servicing its foreign debt, underlined again this week by its formal notification of delays in payments to its creditors, ought to make possible some form of debt-for-environment deal."

What is the Treasury's view?

I know that there are constraints on time, and this is my last question. Treasury Ministers, along with many other people, will know about the long articles on the Brazilian rain forest that have appeared in *The Sunday Times*. I—like, I suspect, a number of my colleagues—wrote a detailed letter to Sir Peter Walters. BP has always been extremely helpful to me; I represent one of its big units in Grangemouth, where many people work. I should like to ask the Treasury about an aspect of the reply to my letter. I think that this is in order, as it directly concerns the World Bank.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is indirectly related, but as I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is about to conclude his remarks, I shall allow him to do so.

Mr. Dalyell: It is difficult to scrutinise the actions of the British director of the World Bank in the House—although I do not criticise him personally. Presumably he acts under Great George street instructions.

Item 2 of Sir Peter Walters' reply states:

"'The mining company says the total directly cleared for open cast mining sites is 13,500 acres', whereas, 'an expert employed by the World Bank and surveys by the Brazilian forestry service estimate that as much as 250,000 acres has been adversely affected'."

BP replied:

"The area of the Jamari National Forest is 215,000 hectares (531,000 acres) in which Jacunda's mining rights cover 59,500 hectares (147,000 acres) about 28 per cent. of the Forest. The area of land cleared for operations, including mining, access roads, housing and caring for the workforce and their families, is 4,500 acres, less than 1 per cent. of the Forest; depending on the season, a further 2,500 to 7,000 hectares are flooded areas to provide water for the operation. These figures have been confirmed by the forestry service, IBAMA.

As we have so far been unable to contact Marc Dourojeannie, the World Bank authority cited by the Sunday Times, we cannot comment on the basis of his calculations, or his statement on the area being 'affected', but if they are intended to apply only to the Jacunda project they are simply incompatible with the scale of this operation."

As the Treasury is the British Ministry responsible for World Bank actions, I am entitled to ask for a considered reply from the Treasury—although obviously I cannot expect an answer tonight—explaining what instructions it has given our own executive director of the World Bank about the controversy between Sir Peter Walters and BP on the one hand *The Sunday Times* on the other.

Mr. Lilley: Hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed concern about the burden of debt, including servicing debt, placed on many underdeveloped countries. The question we must consider is whether the new clause provides an appropriate way of dealing with the problem. As my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) correctly and lucidly spelt out, the existing law already relieves all bad debts from taxation, whether they are owed to sovereign Governments or commercial entities, and no distinction between the two is made.

In practice, new clause 7, which grants relief when a debt to a sovereign third world country is cancelled, would add nothing to the existing law. It would be neither a relief nor, as it stands, a restriction of a relief. It would simply reaffirm part of a relief that is inherent in the law as it stands.

The debate is circling around new clause 8 which, for technical reasons, has not been called. New clause 8 would limit tax relief in respect of other bank loans to Third world countries which have not been cancelled. The question is whether the new clause would help. It is obviously intended to encourage the cancellation of Third world debts to banks, but it would discourage new lending by banks to Third world countries. Banks would be unlikely to enter into new loans with Third world countries if they knew that, in the event of failure to repay, tax relief would not be made available to them, as it is when they make provision for expected repayments in their dealings with sovereign countries or commercial companies. We should be creating a disincentive to banks to engage in new lending to underdeveloped countries. That would be good. A resumption of new lending by banks to underdeveloped countries is vital, where appropriate, and where confidence exists. That is part of the reason for the so-called Brady plan and the encouragement of moves along those lines by the Group of Seven. We should like the burden of servicing existing debt to be alleviated and new lending to be resumed by commercial banks to large debtors. I cannot therefore recommend either new clause 7 or new clause 8, although I recognise the entirely benevolent intentions of the Opposition in tabling them.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said that the effect of Government lending and of the lending by international financial institutions had enabled the underdeveloped countries to repay their interest on commercial debt to commercial banks and that it had amounted, therefore, to a subsidy to the banks. He is saying, in effect, that Government aid goes not to underdeveloped countries but by a circuitous route to banks. It was an interesting attempt to undermine the case for Government aid to underdeveloped countries. According to that analysis, none of it reaches underdeveloped countries.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) rightly pointed out that banks have a fiduciary responsibility in the running of their affairs both to their shareholders—the people who ultimately finance the provisions that are made against bad debts—and to their depositors and that it is right that they should behave responsibly and recognise their duties. We welcome the fact that the worst phase of the debt crisis has passed. It poses much less of a threat to the world financial system than it did because banks have built up provisions, at the expense of their shareholders, to enable them to finance the bad debts on their books. We do not believe that it is wrong that in meeting the tax law requirements they should enjoy tax relief on those provisions against bad debts. It is accepted that people should not pay tax on profits that they have not made. If we were to deprive them of tax relief on the provisions that they have made against genuine bad debts, we should be taxing them on profits that they have not made. That could not be in the interests of the banking system, depositors and the many shareholders who ultimately are the owners of the banks.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way because I was not here during the earlier part of the discussion on the new clause. The Minister says that the worst part of the debt crisis is over. It may be over for the European banks, but for Third world countries, which are under the hammer of the International Monetary Fund, the worst part of the debt crisis is yet to come. The debt crisis is not just about making life easy for western European banks; it is also about social and political conditions in Third world countries. Does the Minister agree that banks which made unwise loans to corrupt and illiberal régimes should not get a tax rake off from the taxpayer?

8.15 pm

Mr. Lilley: I hope that the hon. Lady is satisfied with making that rather pedantic point. I said that the worst threat to the international financial system is over. I accept that the real concern of the House, as I began by saying—perhaps the hon. Lady was not in the Chamber even then—relates to the poverty burden that has been placed on underdeveloped countries. I gave up five years of my life to working on aid programmes in underdeveloped countries, so I know considerably more about it than perhaps the hon. Lady does. Therefore, attempts to prove that she is holier than the rest of us carry little weight.

Our contribution to the well-being of indebted countries takes a number of forms. My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield paid tribute to the fact that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer took a leading part in what became known as the Toronto terms agreement, under which sub-Saharan African countries—those most heavily indebted and whose debts are primarily to Governments—have had their loans converted into gifts by the creditor companies, while the servicing costs of non-aid loans have been reduced. That has been a major achievement of British diplomacy. A number of countries are already benefiting from that international agreement.

It is vital that we should also encourage the renewed flow of private capital from developed countries to underdeveloped countries—not least equity capital. Since we abolished exchange controls, the flow of private capital from this country to developing countries has exceeded that of all the other member states of the European Community put together and amounts to many billions of pounds. *[Interruption.]* When equity capital is invested by developed countries in developing countries, it increases considerably the wealth of those countries—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott), who knows absolutely nothing about trade, chooses to demur.

Ms. Abbott *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: The second way in which this country can help developing countries is by opening up the prospects for free trade. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said that we give aid with one hand and take it back via trade. Nothing could be further from the truth. By opening the markets of developed countries to the products of developing countries we are benefiting them. *[Interruption.]* The whole House must surely welcome that. *[Interruption.]* Unless the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington has anything novel to say on the subject, I shall not give way to her.

We also want to encourage, by means of aid provision and any technical assistance that we can give to developing countries, the development of their own economies so that they will be able to prosper on their own without having to rely on aid. *[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Lady wish to intervene or just to continue to chatter?

Ms. Abbott: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way because, as he says, I was not here during the early part of the debate. However, is he aware that 3 per cent. of the gross domestic product of developing countries flows not from us to them but from them to us?

Mr. Lilley: If the hon. Lady had been here during the early part of the debate she would have known that that point had been agreed by all the parties. She has not contributed to the debate by intervening and making that point now.

Having taken the initiative in the case of the sub-Saharan African countries—the most impoverished and the most indebted countries whose debt is primarily to Governments—our concern now relates mostly to middle income debtors. Their debt is, by and large, with the commercial banks. It is therefore up to them, in consultation with the commercial banks, to reach arrangements to their mutual benefit to enable those countries satisfactorily to service debts, where appropriate, for the banks to recognise that debts may have to be written off, to reschedule or reduce the burden of those debts and, above all, to try to open the way to renewal of lending. That is the way forward, but it cannot be achieved by the Government manipulating the tax system, and for that reason I urge the House not to accept the new clause.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked a lengthy list of questions. Obviously I shall have to write to him, but I hope that he will clarify his second question asking me whether I am aware of the hiccup problem and the fact that it could well lead to Japanese fishermen going round the Galapagos Islands. I shall need considerable clarification before I can answer that question, but I shall do my best.

I urge the Opposition to withdraw new clause 7 which fails to achieve what they sought, and would simply create a disincentive to new lending by banks to underdeveloped countries, which the whole House wishes to continue.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The Economic Secretary's style in the House seems to be deteriorating. He seems to be modelling himself on the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and I cannot commend that. As I understand his summation of the debate, the decision to borrow money carries great moral obligations which can never be redressed, yet the decision to lend does not. We do not accept that proposition. Nevertheless, the Economic Secretary was right in discerning that our heart was really in clause 8 which has not been called. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 9

SCHEDULE E: BENEFITS IN KIND

'(1) Section 154 ICTA 1988 shall not apply to any benefits facilities or expenditure falling within subsection (2) below..

(2) This subsection applies to the bona fide provision of workplace nurseries of other creche facilities which are made available generally to the children of employees at a location on a basis that such provision would not have the effect of conferring benefits wholly or mainly on directors of companies or on those employees who are in receipt of the higher or highest levels of remuneration.'.—*[Mr. Chris Smith.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Chris Smith: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss new clause 11——

Tax Relief for nursery care—

'(1) For the purposes of the Tax Act 1988, section 154, there shall be excluded from a charge to income tax of a benefit in kind any benefit arising from an employee from the provision by the employer of nursery care facilities to any children under 5 of the employee, provided only that such nursery facilities are available to employees of the employer generally.

(2) An employee making payments for nursery care in respect of any of their own children under 5 shall be entitled to claim, as a deduction qualifying for basic income tax relief only, any payment made in this regard up to a limit of £45 per week per child.

(3) For the purposes of the above clause, an employee is defined as a person who works 25 hours a week or more, excluding meal breaks.'.

Mr. Smith: On 11 April, the Home Office issued a news release from the ministerial group on women's issues headed:

"Choice and high standards are the key to the provision of childcare".

It emphasised how important the Government believed the provision of good quality childcare was. The Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), said:

"Employers also have a significant part to play—using the tax reliefs available to them, to provide childcare facilities and to attract skilled mothers who have chosen to return to work in a time of demographic change."

That point was emphasised later in the press release. One of the points in the five-point plan announced by the Government to assist women to enter the work force was:

"Further encouragement to employers to use the tax reliefs available to provide childcare facilities."

To ram the point home even further, the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science said:

"These initiatives are a significant contribution in developing the provisions of childcare."

That news release demonstrated clearly that the Government have hit on the extremely important principle of supporting the provision of good childcare facilities by employers at the workplace. But by their actions the Government are fundamentally undermining the principle they purport to uphold. For a start, there is very little incentive in the tax system—and very little take-up by employers—to provide workplace nurseries. The offsetting

[Mr. Smith]

of workplace nursery provision against corporation tax liability involves, among other things, a long-term commitment which many employers are reluctant to make.

The crucial drawback to providing workplace nursery provision is the tax on the deemed benefit that a parent receives when placing a child in a subsidised workplace nursery. Since 1985, the Inland Revenue has regarded the taking up of a subsidised nursery place as a benefit in kind. The subsidy has to be added to the income for income tax computation, provided that the total of income plus deemed benefits is at least £8,500. The tax on workplace nursery take-up acts as a powerful disincentive to parents with young chidlren, especially mothers considering taking up employment when the changing demography of the work force means that we should be encouraging rather than discouraging women from taking up work.

There are about 100 workplace nurseries in the United Kingdom. The main providers tend to be local authorities and health authorities. It is estimated that as few as 20 companies in the private sector provide workplace nurseries. One honourable potential exception to that is Midland Bank plc which is proposing a large-scale development of between 200 and 300 workplace nurseries. If that goes ahead, the bank will deserve considerable credit, but the current figure of 100 workplace nurseries throughout the country is far too low. It demonstrates first the need to ensure that the provision of workplace nursery space is increased, and secondly that the income to the Exchequer from the tax which the Inland Revenue imposes on the deemed benefit is minimal.

On the need to increase provision, Britain is currently one of Europe's poorest providers of childcare facilities. We should be developing a pattern of provision in which employers certainly have a part to play alongside local authorities and voluntary organisations. Most of Europe and the United States have no tax on workplace nursery provision. The tax discourages employees from taking up workplace nursery places and employers from providing workplace nurseries. While the tax exists for the potential beneficiaries, employers will be much more reluctant to establish workplace nurseries. The tax acts as a discouragement to the provision of workplace nurseries, and removing the tax would assist.

As for the income to the Exchequer, every time I have asked the Financial Secretary by means of parliamentary questions for information about how much money accrues to the Exchequer as a result of the tax on the deemed benefit of workplace nursery provision, the answer is that the Government do not know. The figure is so small that the Government are unable to compute the benefit to the Exchequer. That makes nonsense of the argument that the Inland Revenue has occasionally deployed and, in particular, deployed in a letter of 4 May to the Workplace Nurseries Campaign, in which it set out what I presume is the Government's policy on the matter. It said:

"The Government recognise both the contribution to the economy of women with children and the importance of making the best use of their skills in the future."

So far, so good. The Inland Revenue sensibly made an important point.

8.30 pm

However, the letter continues:

"But they believe that it is better to encourage those mothers who wish to work to do so by reducing tax rates and increasing personal allowances rather than by providing special exemptions which tend to narrow the tax base and drive tax rates up."

We know that the income from the deemed tax on nursery workplace provision is minimal. How on earth can it be assumed to narrow the tax base and drive tax rates up? The Government and the Inland Revenue ignore the fact that it is possible both to follow the pattern that the Government themselves wish to set on tax rates and personal allowances, and to take the step for which we argue and remove the tax on workplace benefit. There is no fiscal or financial excuse for the Government to keep this tax in place.

When the Government initially brought in the measures to tax workplace nursery provision, they argued that it would be a tax only on the benefits of the high paid. They set a threshold of £8,300, about which one might have had queries even at the time. That figure is now equal to roughly the average working woman's wage. It is hardly a threshold which means that only the high paid end up having to face this tax. It is a particular irony that one can be liable for workplace nursery tax at the same time as receiving family credit because one's income is too low for the needs of the family.

One specific example has been drawn to my attention by the Workplace Nurseries Campaign. The single mother in question works in Leicester and uses the Leicester city council workplace nursery. She has monthly outgoings of £62 in nursery fees, £50 in nursery tax, £140 in mortgage and £23 in rates. Even with the addition of £32 a month family credit, she is left with less than £40 a week to feed and clothe herself and her four-year-old child. The fact that the Government can with one hand take away £50 in the workplace nursery tax and with the other hand give £32 a month in family credit makes a nonsense of the tax which the Government seek to continue by rejecting new clause 9.

The workplace nursery tax causes hardship in many cases. The Government argue that taking up workplace nursery provision is a perk or benefit, like a company car. But nursery provision is completely different from that. It is an essential, necessary and insurmountable provision, which not only enables a woman to take up work, but has to be available before she can even contemplate being able to do so. One cannot say the same about the great majority of people who benefit from a company car. If the Government want to use the argument about perks and benefits, why do they not extend the workplace nurseries principle to subsidised canteens, sports grounds or aspects of pension provision? All those are tax free and are not subject to the same provisions as workplace nurseries.

What about the security provisions of clauses 50, 51 and 52? It is right that those clauses should be included because they are sensible and justifiable measures. However, the same principle that applies to the essential provision of security measures should apply to the essential provision of workplace nursery space for women who need to avail themselves of that space to enable them to go to work.

For many years, the Labour party has argued that the workplace nursery tax should be removed. In moving new clause 9, we seek to achieve precisely that. The tax causes hardship, it discourages women from seeking work and it provides a disincentive for enlightened employers seeking to establish good workplace provision. The workplace nursery tax should have been scrapped years ago and we

are offering the House a chance to do so, at long last, today. It brings in a minimal income to the Exchequer and acts as a powerful disincentive to women, with young children, who are thinking of going out to work. We should be encouraging them, not discouraging them with an extra burden in tax. The Government claim that a nursery place is a perk; it is not. It is an essential facility to enable women to play a full part in the economic life of our nation. There is no such tax in other European countries or in the United States and there should not be one in Britain.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I am rather puzzled by the speech of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). I will not support his point because it is far too timorous. We do not need workplace provision for children; we need nursery education for all. I am surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman speaking in a rather technocratic way, which suggests that the Labour party is losing its radical impetus and, perhaps, its broader vision.

I also have an ideological objection to what the hon. Gentleman said. It is not the function of employers to look after the dependants of employees. The answer to the problem he raised is much broader. We should have high-quality nursery provision for all. It is rather typical of the hon. Gentleman that at no point did he mention the function of that dreadful, anonymous word "provision". I am concerned not with child care, but with educating children and doing something productive for a child's development, rather than merely looking after a child in some "caring" mode.

Mr. Madden: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Walden: No, because I am going to speak very briefly.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my hon. Friend not give way even to me?

Mr. Walden: How can I refuse?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is my hon. Friend aware that in the teeth of opposition from Lancashire county council we have opened a gorgeous nursery provision in our local Skerton county primary school? The county council which is, of course, Labour-controlled turned the scheme down two years ago. However, as a result of the pupils themselves putting the case forcefully and the parents' support we obtained the wonderful provision for which my hon. Friend is now speaking.

Mr. Walden: My heart is warmed, but not overflowing. I remember defending the Government record, which was creditable, when I was an Education Minister. Provision had risen from 17 per cent. to 42 per cent. over about 10 years and that sounded fine. Fortunately, no one ever asked two basic questions. The first was that if nursery provision was so good, why was it not available to everybody? People could have asked me why it depended on where a child lived. Secondly, there was the question of the quality of nursery provision. I would not spend a penny piece, to paraphrase an hon. Member, on low quality "caring" child care.

We should spend as much as we possibly can on high-quality, educative nursery provision for all. We have 42 per cent. nursery provision, and it is extremely patchy. Some of it is amateur and some of it consists of play care. Some of it is very good—I have seen some very good nursery schools run by local authorities—but the fact remains that in Britain we have only 42 per cent. provision, whereas in France the figure is 97 per cent. That may account in part for the generally higher quality of the behaviour of children in French schools and the generally higher quality of their educational attainment.

We frequently see in the newspapers touching photographs of Princess Diana taking her children to nursery school. She is setting a splendid example, but there are an awful lot of people in this country who will never have the money to buy private nursery education and there are an awful lot of places where nursery education is not provided by local authorities. Having briefly served in Government, I have the disadvantage of being a realist. I know that such provision costs a lot of money. Indirectly, the Government are already spending about £400 million on local provision. If we are to double nursery provision, therefore, we are talking about a figure of about £1 billion.

I do not expect the Government to give me the assurance that I should like to hear. Clearly we shall have to be extremely careful about public expenditure in the short term. Having said that, I do not understand the Government's argument—which, as a loyal supporter, I naturally had to advance—that nursery education is an excellent thing, but that it should not be available for everyone.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) has underlined the case supported by members of all parties for more widespread nursery education. We had hints of such support from the Prime Minister in her earlier guise as Secretary of State for Education, but since them nursery education has slipped further and further down the list of priorities.

The question of such provision is an important part of the background to the new clause. The first and main argument for providing nursery education is that it is in the interests of the children themselves. In many cases, their subsequent school career can be greatly enhanced by a year or more of nursery education.

The second compelling reason for such provision is to be found in current demographic trends in Britain. It is obvious that in many areas it will be impossible to recruit sufficient people of the necessary skill and ability into industry and the public service if more opportunities are not provided for women to take employment, and that cannot be done without nursery provision.

The third argument in favour of nursery provision concerns rights and opportunities for women. Quite apart from the labour shortages of the future, we should remember that many women feel prevented from developing their potential in employment and serving the community, whether in the public service or the private sector, because of lack of nursery provision.

I support the proposals in the new clause, but, as the hon. Member for Buckingham said, they are somewhat timid and lacking in radicalism, as they do not go beyond the concept of the workplace nursery, which at the moment accounts for a minuscule proportion of nursery provision. Workplace provision has actually shrunk. I can remember when there was at least one workplace nursery in my constituency, but it is no longer there.

Perhaps the new clause will lead to some enlargement of workplace nursery provision. That would be a good thing and would be of benefit, as people would then be able to take advantage of workplace provision without suffering a

[Mr. Beith]

tax disadvantage. But the new clause is unlikely to answer the needs of large numbers of women who want to work, and it will make no difference to those on low incomes who have access to workplace nurseries at present.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said that the average woman's wage was £8,500 a year. That took me by surprise. The hon. Gentleman must have looked at the figures more recently than I have. If that is the average women's wage, I can tell him that not many women in my constituency are earning the average. A great many of the women who might use workplace nurseries do not fall into the category of people who would enjoy a tax benefit from the provisions of the new clause. That is not an argument against the new clause; it simply shows that much remains to be done if we are to make a significant advance in the provision of nursery facilities.

The new clause will do nothing for the numerous people who now have to buy nursery provision or child care because they do not have access to workplace nurseries. Many people are in that category and they will remain in that category because workplace nurseries would never answer all the needs, even if provision were miraculously extended to every large place of work. For many women, it is neither convenient nor appropriate to take a child away from the local environment where friends and family may be able to help at the end of the nursery school day. And such provision is clearly not appropriate in jobs where there is no single large workplace in which to provide such facilities.

My hon. Friends and I have argued for a wider provision, designed to afford some tax relief to those who are buying nursery education or child care and to enable them to remain in employment. The relief would, of course, be confined to those in employment.

8.45 pm

Before the Government rush to attack the idea of using the tax system to provide such a benefit or subsidy, they must remember that in this Finance Bill they are extending tax relief to private health care for pensioners on the basis that that is immensely socially desirable. The provision of some tax relief for those needing nursery care for their children if they are to work is not only socially desirable; it will become ever more urgent over the next few years as acute labour shortages arise in some major industries in the public sector.

The arguments extend beyond the proposals in the new clause that my hon. Friends and I have tabled, as the need for provision extends beyond the age of five. There are strong arguments for greater child care provision for those of school age—for example, in the school holidays and between 3 pm and 6 pm, when many women have to work if they are to remain in employment. In the years to come we must consider how we can make adequate provision for good child care that is beneficial and educative to the children concerned and enables women to take employment.

The new clause would relieve a tiny number of women of a tax burden. That is no bad thing, and I welcome it. It may enhance somewhat the attractiveness of workplace nurseries and I shall be pleased if it does that, too. Nevertheless, it represents a very small step in terms of providing nursery care for the children of women who want to work and providing child care for a larger number of children.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I, too, shall be brief, because I realise that there is a lot of interest in this subject.

I think that the Government have taken the right line. All sorts of complications will arise if we adopt the proposals of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) or the hon. Member for—[HON. MEMBERS: "Berwick-upon-Tweed."] Not only did I forget the constituency of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), but I have forgotten the name of his party. Both proposals would cause more anomalies than they would solve.

If we say that a workplace nursery is not a perk and therefore should not be taxed because it does not confer benefit, we shall immediately create an anomaly. There are those who, because of the nature of their work, do not and never will have access to workplace nurseries. Is it fair that one group of employees should get free child care, which is what it would amount to, while another group of employees who do not have access to workplace nurseries still have to pay for them? If we broaden the matter and say that the answer is tax reliefs on child care in general, whether it is provided in workplace nurseries or whether people make their own arrangements, we create another anomaly. Do we still extend tax relief on child care to mothers who are not working but who nevertheless employ help for their children and, if not, why not? Can child care be administered in two completely separate tiers? There are important practical difficulties in doing what the Opposition wish.

Additionally, the principle behind the Government's reasoning is right. There are many crucial matters in deciding whether a woman goes out to work, and child care is but one of them. It is not the only crucial, essential point that a woman will consider when deciding whether to work. There is the obvious cost of getting to work. I have never heard this disputed, but that should certainly be regarded as the employee's responsibility, whatever distance the person has to travel to get to work.

Mr. Win Griffiths: The hon. Lady must know that many large companies provide free buses as a matter of course to take their work force to work.

Miss Widdecombe: That is if the employer rather than the employee is remote. If the employee decides that it is worth incurring a large cost to commute over substantial distances to get to work, regardless of the incursion into his wage packet, that is very much his own concern. The same applies to company cars. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said that by no means could company cars be compared with child care. However, in some instances, company cars are essential for the work to be done.

Mr. Chris Smith: The hon. Lady must have misheard me. I said clearly and specifically that in a majority of cases company cars are a genuine perk. There are, of course, some forms of employment in which a company car is a necessity, and I would class those cases somewhat differently.

Miss Widdecombe: Nevertheless, even if a company car is essential, to a certain extent it is still regarded as a perk.

I cannot believe that the hon. Gentleman has never had representations on that point. I have certainly received many representations from people who are being taxed on their company cars and who go into great detail explaining why and how their cars are not a benefit but a necessity. It is an absolute necessity for me, when employing office secretaries, to have a typewriter. If I choose to buy one rather than hire one, I still pay the tax on it because it is deemed to be a benefit. All sorts of essential items—child care may be one—are not entirely free of tax.

Where do we stop if we say that it is essential that a woman receives tax benefits on child care if she is to go out to work? If she is allowed to receive tax benefits on the care of her youngest child, why should she not be able to claim that if she has to go out to work for long hours—the normal work time, with only four weeks' holiday a year—she requires additional domestic help? Should that not be regarded as a perk? That question must be answered.

It seem very worthy to say that we want to encourage women to go back to work and that we should either remove the tax on workplace nurseries or, possibly, give tax reliefs if other arrangements are made, but it raises all the other essential points associated with a woman going back to work. In Committee there was a long discussion about advancing tax benefits up to a certain sum, but never was it taken into account that one would then benefit those who did not go out to work.

Also I am concerned—I am perhaps not very concerned at this stage, but I could become very concerned—that if we give tax reliefs or remove something that has been regarded as a perk we shall actually direct employers, and employees for that matter, towards a certain method of getting women back to work. There are many ingredients involved in getting women into work. Child care is but one. Flexible working practices is another. I do not want to see child care tax benefit become available in such a way as to make flexible working practices or other possible alternatives second-rate choices so that false pressure develops for one particular form of benefit.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed referred to another problem. He asked whether we were talking about the under-fives. Surely if we expect mothers to work, we are talking also about older children—certainly those up to secondary school age. If we are to have a proper system of child care, nannies must also be taken into account. Their position is different. It is not a matter of a mother taking a child to work with her and taking it home at night. It is a matter of the child being collected and put somewhere for two hours to be looked after and collected again. That is a different system. Will that attract tax advantages? What about that as a necessity, certainly for a mother with older children?

The Opposition are opening a pandora's box. They have not considered the detail of the problem. They are looking at one small aspect of getting women back to work without assessing the effects on other aspects or on non-working women who, nevertheless, have children. All those points must be taken into account. The Opposition have picked on a simple route and have not considered the complexities that will surely follow.

9 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I am grateful for the opportunity to intervene in the debate. Our proposal is simple and straightforward, but Conservative Members have not grasped what it is about. The clause would make the provision of child care at workplace nurseries tax neutral. It would not be a tax incentive. It would mean that women or parents will still pay for nursery places, but they will not pay tax on top of the cost that they already pay.

Opposition Members agree with much of what the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) said, but we are talking mainly about children of ages that are unsuitable for nursery education. We are talking about children aged up to three and about extended day care for children between the ages of three and four. No hon. Member—least of all the hon. Gentleman—would say that we want those children to be in nursery education during all the hours that many workplace nurseries would care for children. Therefore, we are talking about a specific form of child care.

We recognise that that form of child care is, and only ever could be, a small part of the overall pattern of child care and nursery education for which we are looking. Indeed, Ministers have said that many women would not choose a workplace nursery because it would not be suitable for their needs, but I emphasise that it would be eminently suitable for other women and that they want the opportunity of choosing it.

However, the Government's measures are making that provision more and more difficult to achieve. Employers who are trying to establish workplace nurseries are finding that the obstacles are so great that many are giving up before they start. Even the organisation that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) mentioned, the Midland bank, is finding incredible difficulty in putting into practice the commitments that it made earlier this year.

The Government's policy on child care and nursery provision is an incredible mess. On one day I heard the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), say that when considering the Government's child care policy in his position as chairman of the ministerial group on women's issues, the main thought driving him was that the Government should not be seen to be pushing women back into the workplace. However, on the very next day I attended a conference that was addressed by the Secretary of State for Employment. He talked about women seeing the next decade as the window of opportunity upon which they must seize. Therefore, on the one hand the Government are saying to women, "We welcome and value your skills and training in the workplace," and on the other hand they are saying, "We are not going to assist you in any way in making proper provision for your children."

It is no wonder that this country loses far more women from the workplace during their childbearing years than do any of our European competitors. When those women re-enter the work force, they do so with lower status and a lower pay level than they enjoyed when they left. Therefore, their skills, knowledge and experience are being wasted. Women who do not want to take that road and who, perhaps, want to work part-time or to work the flexible hours to which the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) referred have to decide—because there is such woefully inadequate childcare provision—that, because they have children, they have no option but to stay at home and look after them.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): The hon. Lady maintains that there are a number of restrictions facing women going back to work, but does she agree that we have one of the highest percentages of women in work of any European country?

Ms. Armstrong: I do not want to argue with the hon. Gentleman across the Chamber, but his assertion is not true for the critical period that I am talking about. The majority of those women now in the work force are working part-time and for the majority that is not through choice. I invite the hon. Gentleman to talk to the editor of the *Sunday Mirror* about the campaign that that newspaper has been running. Since it raised this issue in its columns, it has received thousands upon thousands of letters and petitions from women on this single issue about removing the workplace nursery tax. Women recognise the barriers that I am talking about as barriers.

I also invite the hon. Gentleman to read a recent report published by the Equal Opportunities Commission, which showed the number of women that we are losing from the workplace. We are losing their skills and training because they never re-enter the work force at a level at which they can use the skills and training that they had had as younger women. The EOC has said that the main reason for that is the poverty of our child care provision.

One of our problems in this country is that we still try to make women feel guilty if they want to work and to rear children. That is nonsense because in those countries that have a long-established tradition of strong family life, such as Italy and France, full-time child care is available for young children because it is recognised as a way of enhancing family life rather than detracting from it. It is time that we moved towards that sort of culture and those ideas.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The arguments that my hon. Friend has outlined are one of the reasons why many women feel compelled to compete for jobs working in schools, such as on school meals. As that is the only thing that they can do, there is great competition for those jobs which meet and match school hours. I know that my wife faced that situation when our children were at school.

Ms. Armstrong: My hon. Friend apparently knows of the experience of interviewing women for a job at about £1·50 an hour for about 12 hours a week and receiving a huge number of applications for the job.

My hon. Friend also mentioned schools. Another aspect of Government policy has meant a great shortage of primary school teachers. Our recent research shows that a reason why we are losing primary school teachers and cannot keep them in the profession is that they are not eligible for priority places in nurseries, so they cannot work. The children of this country are beginning to suffer because of that.

It is important to offer a variety of opportunities to parents and children. Workplace nurseries are only a part of that, and it is extraordinary that the Government should see them as a perk. This morning I visited a private nursery which is determined not to sacrifice quality to make money. Because of that, it has to charge £109 a week to cover costs. The nursery is prepared to offer its services in the work place. If the company subsidises it at, say, £20 a week, parents would still have to find £89. Under the Government's policy they would have to pay tax on top of that.

It is difficult to speak on this issue only in the terms of the Finance Bill because the Government are enacting so many measures that affect child care. Under the Children Bill, it is intended to charge for the registration of day nurseries and child minders. So the Government are placing another charge on childcare and workplace nurseries.

The Government cannot be serious about quality, because these costs put quality out of the reach of the vast majority of working women. We are asking for a minimum contribution, but if the Government accepted the new clause they would show that they had begun to grasp what the problem is about. It is not a simple issue, to be solved by throwing a few pounds at it. It is complex and it affects the future opportunities of millions of children.

I ask the Government to rethink. On the evidence of this debate there is clearly much misunderstanding about this subject. We have never argued that workplace nurseries are the answer to everything, but they do contribute to offering some parents the chance to place their children in a workplace nursery if they believe that that is best for their families.

The Government have erected many obstacles. We ask them to remove one of the small ones, which would cost them very little but would mean symbolically that they were beginning to realise the enormity of the task of beginning to compete with our European neighbours. Accepting the new clause would mean that the Government had begun to consider the future opportunities of our children and women. That is not much to ask, and I urge the Government to accept the new clause.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): As an educationist, I strongly support the case made by my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) for nursery education for all children whose parents seek to avail themselves of it. However, we are in some danger in this debate of pressing for two-tier nursery provision. While I believe that, if nothing else is available, a workplace nursery would be of great value to a child, the fact is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) said, in some areas outstanding community provision is made for children aged from three to five years and from nought to three years. We could have the situation in which, on the one hand, children are in beautifully run, expensive community nurseries, surrounded by green fields, and, on the other, children are in workplace nurseries, perhaps in factories, begrimed, with vile surroundings—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) is shaking her head, but with me she visited an establishment in the United States where the children did not see daylight. I do not believe that it is fair, as a principle, to provide facilities for children in which there is such inequality. We should be saying that we want good provision for all children.

I have been listed as being in favour of workplace nurseries. If nothing else is available, there is a lot to be said for such provision, but it is second best. No inspections are made and no standards are laid down for the children——

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill) *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: I shall not give way. The hon. Lady will have her opportunity.

No standards are laid down for the staff working in workplace nurseries, or for the facilities for the children. That is where the workplace nursery movement falls down. It does not hold a satisfactory standard to which we can point. The best nurseries are excellent, but the worst are not and cannot be satisfactory.

I mentioned the visit of the hon. Member for Durham, North-West, who keeps interrupting from a sedentary position, and myself to the United States. We saw children in a nursery in Washington, which was very nicely appointed, but we were uncertain about the education being offered to those children. It was not of the kind that I would have sought. Children from two weeks upwards were in that institution, but the staff said that they ensured that all the children got out into green fields for at least three hours a day. That just could not happen in many workplace nurseries, which is one of my reservations about them. We must also face the fact that they are not inspected and that they have no agreed and established standards. People who advocate workplace nurseries do themselves and their cause no favours by ignoring that argument.

Ms. Armstrong: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Lady has made her speech; perhaps she will allow me to make mine.

What I am saying is not to condemn workplace nurseries or the important argument that has been put by hon. Members on both sides of the House for supporting working women, especially those with young children. We must remember that in the United States 62 per cent. of women with a child of one year old or younger go to work, while in this country it is only 27 per cent. The figures are rising in each country. When my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham said that the nation's attention should be drawn to the need to provide children with something better than a workplace nursery, he was speaking sound good sense.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) did not advance a single educational argument in favour of workplace nurseries.

Ms. Armstrong *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: I should also like to have heard some educational arguments from the hon. Lady, who persists in trying to intervene. She said nothing about what workplace nurseries are intended to do for children aged up to three and even between three and five.

The case for workplace nurseries can be made. In particular, the child must develop self-esteem above all things, but it will not do so if it is cast aside, uncared for, and not given proper nursery provision. So much flows from self-esteem. The whole philosophy of the headstart programme in the United States is based on giving children self-esteem, which is quite right. More needs to be made of the value of nursery education and of the precise roles that workplace nurseries have to play. Is it right to expand the provision of workplace nurseries, or would it be better to expand the provision of nurseries of a broader and more general nature?

9.15 pm

Ms. Abbott: As many of the arguments for workplace nurseries have already been made, I shall make only three brief points. Many of the proposals made in debate are impractical, and that is because so few right hon. and hon. Members bear the responsibility for having their children looked after while they go to work. As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said, how can the Government claim that they are responding to demographic changes by trying to get more women into the work force when they are unwilling to look favourably upon the ideas contained in new clause 9?

Conservative Members speak about workplace nurseries and tax relief as though they are simply cash benefits. Clearly no Conservative Member who has spoken has experience of getting children out of bed, getting their breakfast, taking them to a child minder, and then going to work. If they had, they would know that for many millions of women throughout the country workplace nurseries are, first and foremost, a practical provision. Without it, many women——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Lady——

Ms. Abbott: No, I shall not give way.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Abbott: Without a form of child care—be it a workplace nursery, child minder or nanny—many women are unable to work. We are keen to see new clause 9 implemented because it will enable women to do a day's work without worrying.

Conservative Members complain and vilify mothers of single parent families who claim benefit. I know thousands of such women in Hackney who want to go out to work and not be dependent upon either state benefits or an errant male. If proper child care facilities, such as workplace nurseries, are provided, those women could be self-reliant—as they wish to be. We seek to encourage that spirit of self-reliance in new clause 9. Every week I meet constituents who are stopped from working because they have no access to child care facilities, so work place nurseries have a role to play.

Conservative Members also remarked that Britain has the highest, or one of the highest, proportions of women in the work force in Europe. They do not realise the kind of child care that some women have to put up with.

I was brought up in a community where many women had to work, not because they wanted to do so, not for entertainment or for a diversion, but because they had to pay the rent. Many had to abandon their children to child minders against their better judgment. If Conservative Members had seen, as I did while growing up, the child care that some women were forced to use because of their economic circumstances, they would not be blocking a sensible provision that will provide high-quality workplace nurseries. For some women, the alternative is not to stay at home. Sadly, with heaviness of heart and great misgivings, they entrust their children to child minders who do not have the necessary training or facilities. If Conservative Members had more idea of what life was like for working women, they would not argue against the new clause.

For three reasons—the importance of encouraging women to go into the workplace, the importance of generating high-quality workplace nurseries and the fact that this is much more than a cash benefit—I ask Conservative Members to support the new clause. It is about the practicalities for working women. No Labour

[Ms. Abbott]

Member thinks that workplace nurseries are the only solution, but it is wrong for Conservative Members who do not have our experiences of helping and supporting ordinary working women, struggling with the problems of bringing up children and giving their children decent care while they go out to work——

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Abbott: I wish to finish my speech.

For Conservative Members with no experience of the problems of working class women, who are trying to give their children decent care and go out to work, to block a measure that is at least part of the answer suggests great ignorance, callousness and lack of thought about demographic trends. I urge hon. Members to think about the struggles of working women, many of them single women who wish to be independent and who despair at the options offered to them, and to support the new clause.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Some of the contributions to the debate would have been better made in an education debate. I agree with the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) that our objective should be good quality nursery education available to all parents who want it for their children, but this debate on the Finance Bill is not the time when that should be developed.

The new clause is important in terms of the way in which local authorities provide nursery education. The sad fact is that the hon. Member for Buckingham would be better off tramping around the Tory shires and preaching this message to them. The worst providers of nursery education are Conservative-controlled authorities. Money provided by the Government in rate support grant for nursery needs is not even spent by those authorities. Some of them do not provide one state-funded place in a nursery school. The nursery place is a second best provision for those who cannot go to nursery schools, but if workplace nurseries spread there is no reason why there cannot be state regulation—however much Conservative Members may not like those words—to ensure that the quality and environment of workplace nurseries are good.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) kept referring to high-quality provision at the workplace. The trouble is that there is no machinery to ensure that there is other than what she referred to as child-minding. The hon. Gentleman's point is good—the workplace nurseries must be of high quality—but how does one ensure that there is uniformity throughout the land?

Mr. Griffiths: A debate on the Finance Bill is not the time to discuss ways to regulate workplace nurseries. We must ensure that they are of a high quality, and there are plenty of ways to achieve that. What amounts to a tax on working mothers who happen to have a child in a workplace nursery is a disincentive for companies to spread and develop nursery provision.

The scale of the problem can best be shown by comparing Britain's provisions with those of Denmark. In Britain, only about 8 per cent. of women with families are in full-time employment, yet we provide only 1 per cent. to 2 per cent. of nursery places for children under the age of one. In Denmark, 40 per cent. of women with families are in full-time employment and it provides more than 40 per cent. of nursery places for the youngest children.

The hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) suggested that such a provision would introduce an anomaly into the tax system. Many such anomalies already exist. In general, the 20 best providers of nursery education are Labour-controlled authorities which, in many cases, spend even more than the Government allow to ensure good nursery education. Let us take the example of a working mother who sends her four-year-old to a state-funded nursery. There is no tax impediment and the child receives a full-time education. Let us now take the example of a similar woman in a Conservative-controlled authority which provides no nursery places. If the child is placed in a workplace nursery—if there happens to be a place available—the woman is taxed on the estimated financial benefit of that nursery place. I hope, incidentally, that my remarks will not encourage the Minister to tax the assumed value of state-funded nursery education. The new clause would remove that anomaly.

Miss Widdecombe: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, especially as it is not the first time. What would be the position of the working mother in a Labour-controlled authority who cannot put her child into full-time nursery education because the child is under the age of two and does not have the benefit of a subsidised workplace nursery, who thus has to pay for child care?

Mr. Griffiths: The whole point of the new clause is to ensure that that mother could send her child to a subsidised workplace nursery.

Miss Widdecombe: But what if it does not exist?

Mr. Griffiths: If the new clause were passed, more companies would be prepared to provide workplace nurseries and more mothers would be happy to put their children in them.

The new clause would help a relatively small group of women to return to work, in the knowledge that their children were being well cared for because the nurseries would be well regulated and educational. For only a negligible sum of money, the Government are being mean and parsimonious towards working mothers. They are not helping them to return to work.

Mrs. Fyfe: We all knew that the Government would not accept the new clause, but I was curious to discover their reasons for not doing so. We have heard a great deal about educational standards—Conservative Members appear to have forgotten that we are debating a tax Bill, not a children's Bill. If it were appropriate tonight, we would be more than glad to discuss educational standards. The Labour party put forward proposals in its recently published policy review document—I should be glad to lend it to Conservative Members—for a variety of childcare schemes designed to meet the needs of both children and their parents. Workplace nurseries are only one aspect of the variety of child care that we would wish to offer.

The objection on educational grounds comes from a Government who have presided over the worst level of nursery provision in all the EEC countries, and from a Government whose Prime Minister recently told a women's magazine that mothers with childcare difficulties should get together to cobble up some informal

arrangement among themselves. She was apparently unaware that in doing so she was advising them to break the law. In addition, this is a Government who refuse to make care of under-fives a statutory responsibility for local authorities. The result is that the best provisions for the under-fives happen to be in Labour-controlled local authorities, and they are doing that with great difficulty on their constrained budget. Because they do not have a statutory responsibility to educate the under-fives, they are doing so under enormous difficulties.

9.30 pm

If the Government took on board all the points that we have been making, we would be delighted to have their support. But we all know perfectly well that if we were proposing all that tonight, they would vote against it in the Lobby, so let us not have such hypocrisy on the subject.

The hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) referred to maintenance of quality. We want high-quality provision in all sectors of care for the under-fives. But would the hon. Gentleman say that if he could not have dinner at the Ritz he would not dine at all? Of course he would not. Working women might want a convenient nursery in their locality. Mothers would not want to take their children through the wind, rain and snow to a workplace nursery and back again if a more convenient local nursery provided high-quality care. When such provision is denied to them and they know that it will continue to be denied to them as long as the Government are in office, they are interested in workplace nurseries. Provided that they are properly run, there is nothing wrong in that.

The Opposition argue for high standards in nurseries whether they are in the workplace or elsewhere. We would not dream of advocating that a workplace nursery was a place where children were dumped during a working day and that no standards were maintained within it. A Conservative Member asked from a sedentary position how such standards would be maintained. The answer is simple—by an inspectorate, just as schools and factories are inspected. That would be the obvious way.

While the Government are attempting to make the excellent the enemy of the good, offering absurd arguments, they are forgetting one good argument. Our proposal would benefit mainly women, but it would not benefit only women. When I was a Glasgow district councillor, we wanted to set up a workplace nursery for the entire work force, but we were frustrated in doing so because the tax put the cost beyond the pocket of many council employees. However, I recall a male worker in the building department who had five children, two of them under school age, whose wife had left him, who was delighted with the proposal and would have used the nursery. In case Conservative Members fear that backwoodsmen and women in their constituencies would consider this to be some kind of feminist point which they would deplore, let them remember that men, too, could benefit from this. That might make Conservative Members view it more favourably.

I find it hard to understand those who are prepared to dream up every possible argument in favour of the preservation of the life of a child before birth but who do not care tuppence what happens once a child is born. I hope that the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) does not think that that is a brutal argument, but I must make that point. Mothers who do not get a workplace nursery place or a local education authority place are often forced to accept an unsatisfactory arrangement, having their children looked after by someone who is untrained and unregistered, who may not do a good job in caring for their children. If people genuinely care about the needs of children they should support the new clause.

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Lady said that some of us who care for children before birth do not care tuppence about them once they are born. That is categorically untrue. I have taken part in many debates in which I specifically talked about the rights of born children. The hon. Lady does not make a fair point. There are many ways of caring for children. I have not made any speech tonight against child care or nursery provision. I have talked about the anomalies created by various childcare arrangements. Childcare can also be a mother looking after her child at home and I have never done or said anything that militates against that. Will the hon. Lady withdraw that personal insult?

Mrs. Fyfe: I am sorry, but I have not heard anything to make me withdraw those remarks. If the hon. Member for Maidstone is sincere about caring for all children after birth, she would not only support the new clause but make a point of supporting our proposals to make nursery education and playgroup provision the statutory responsibility of local authorities. She would ensure that the Government provided funds to make that possible. If she fails to do that, she will not put her stated objectives into practice.

The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) spoke from experience about standards in the United States where children at nurseries get out into the fresh air. That was an extraordinary remark. No hon. Member has argued against children getting fresh air. When we talk about standards we are not thinking of cooping up children in fume-infested factories. We are thinking of sensible provision which includes fresh air and an inspectorate to maintain high standards.

We do not wish to make workplace nurseries compulsory. Our point is that if the tax were lifted, parents and their employers could judge whether a workplace nursery could be provided and what standards could be offered. They could find a nearby site if it was not convenient to have a nursery at the workplace.

Another specious argument was about the equality of provision. It was asked what would happen if the local authority provided a better standard than the workplace nursery. If people want to compete to provide the best standards, no Labour Member will argue against that. We want the best possible provision. I am sure that the different sectors could learn good practices from each other and the best way to provide for our children.

As has been said, a large part of education is encouraging self-confidence and self-esteem in children and making them aware of their worth as human beings. When the education system achieves that objective we shall never again have a Tory Government because people will have learnt to value themselves more highly and they will drop their deferential attitude which sustains that bunch in Government.

Mr. Pike: I shall be very brief, as the reasons why the new clause should be passed have already been capably put by my hon. Friends.

[Mr. Pike]

I find it deeply regrettable that we should debate the matter yet again this year, and that this year not one Conservative Member has spoken in support of the move that we are debating. The hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) tried to lead us along many false trails and brought many red herrings into the picture, but we are actually discussing a very simple proposal. I was, however, even more concerned by the implication of the hon. Members for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) that Opposition Members were arguing for second best, and should be arguing for nursery education. Both hon. Members know that this is a debate on the Finance Bill, not an education debate. They also know that the Labour party wants a considerable improvement in the provision of nursery education. We shall make that very clear in an appropriate debate. We were not party to the points of view expressed by the hon. Member for Buckingham when he was a Minister at the Department of Education and Science, but I hope that he advocated what he has been advocating today.

Opposition Members have pointed out that most of the best nursery provision is found in Labour authorities. I must add that I do not know of one—including Lancashire, my own county council—which is satisfied with the service that it is able to provide. They would all like to do much more if the finance were available.

The new clause might not achieve what we would consider the best possible provision for children—and for parents who wish to work—but it would help by removing tax from workplace nurseries. As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) has pointed out, the amount of money that the tax yields to the Government is in any case so small as not to be worth bothering about.

As well as enabling parents to pursue a career and to provide income for the family, the new clause would benefit the industries and commercial institutions which provide nursery facilities. They do not do so only for the benefit of their employees; it is to their advantage if those employees return to work. Only 100 or so workplaces provide such facilities at present because many are deterred by the fact that tax will be payable. Employers must consider what package of conditions to offer employees as an incentive and, they hope, to benefit themselves as well. The provision of workplace nurseries will benefit the parent, the family and the institution involved.

If the new clause is carried, I am certain that there will be an increase in the provision of workplace nurseries. Although we realise that the Government's days may well be numbered, we want to help people to go back to work. There will be a growing need for parents of both sexes to do so. I hope that we shall approve the new clause, stop penalising parents and enable more employers to make such facilities available. That will be of advantage to all parties concerned, and to the nation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There have been a number of strong and notable speeches. The Government appreciate the importance of workplace nurseries and of encouraging married women to return to work. My hon. Friends the Members for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) and for Wyre (Mr. Mans) pointed out that this country has been conspicuously successful in encouraging married women to return to work.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Why on earth should we encourage married women to return to work? That is pure Socialism. Why should we not encourage them to stay at home and look after their children? We have great problems with hooligans and vandalism because of ill-disciplined children. Why should we not give a financial incentive to mothers to stay at home and look after their children rather than encouraging the Socialist bunkum and junk put forward by the other side?

9.45 pm

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is being a little hasty if he thinks that I am about to accept the new clause. In fact, I am about to reject it. I was not suggesting that there should be a financial incentive. The burden of my argument will be that if married women want to work and if employers want to employ them, the market will work and employers will pay the necessary wage to encourage married women to return to work.

The new clauses epitomise one of the dilemmas. A narrower and more focused new clause was moved by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). His new clause would confine tax relief to workplace nurseries. The new clause tabled by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) provides for tax relief not just for workplace nurseries but for those who seek to make their own provision for the care of their children at home. I have to reject his new clause on the grounds of cost and of its very large deadweight element.

The effect of the new clause would be to give a large tax subsidy to people who already employ nannies, thereby making provision for the care of their children at home. However, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed has a point. If tax relief is confined narrowly to workplace nurseries, it would result in many inequalities which would not be fair. It would lead to unfairness as between one taxpayer and another.

The hon. Gentleman has not met all the problems that his new clause would create. It would lead to tax relief being given to families where both parents go out to work and pay someone else to look after their children. No tax relief, however, would be given to families where one or other of the parents chooses not to go out to work but to stay at home and look after the children. If the husband goes out to work, however, the wife may prefer not to spend her time looking after the children. She may prefer to play golf and to employ somebody else to look after the children. Under new clause 11, that family could receive a child care allowance. Is that what the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed really has in mind? It might be possible for the taxpayer to pay a relative—perhaps a grandparent—to look after the children and to claim tax relief. What about neighbours looking after each other's children, paying each other for doing so and getting tax relief at the same time?

The new clause is at least to be commended for attempting to face the basic issue of equity as between one taxpayer and another, but the more one looks at the new clause the more one realises that it would lead to further difficulties and problems. Its deadweight cost would amount to about £100 million, before one began to consider whether it would have any effect on behaviour, or

whether it would encourage people to return to work or make provision for their children in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Mr. Hawkins: Is there not a fundamental drawback to workplace nurseries? I find it odd that the Labour party is supporting the idea so strongly because when the mother changes her job the child has to leave the nursery. Surely we should encourage nursery provision regardless of people's jobs or workplace.

Mr. Lamont: That may well be so.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury referred to the tax relief in the tax system. It is important to realise that the tax system, in certain ways which correspond to the basic tax rules, allows employers certain deductions for the provision of workplace nurseries. Employers can set against profits for corporation tax purposes a wide range of expenditure on their day-to-day running costs, because those costs are regarded as normal business costs for providing facilities and suitable working conditions for employees. They can also get tax allowances for capital expenditure on equipping a workplace nursery. Some employers, such as those in the industrial sector, may also get capital allowances for expenditure on constructing or acquiring a building for a workplace nursery.

Employers can thus claim a number of reliefs in making workplace nurseries available.

Because the benefits in kind regulations apply only above an £8,500 threshold, many married women earning less than £8,500 per year are not taxed on the benefit of the workplace nursery. The specific regulations correspond with general reliefs in the tax system and are compatible with our existing system, but they give some encouragement to workplace nurseries. However, our tax system does not—and did not even under a Labour Government—give tax relief to enable people to carry out a particular job. There is no such thing as tax relief to enable someone to do a job. Expenses in the performance of a job may be tax deductible, but expenses to put someone in a position to carry out a job are not tax deductible. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will know that over the years there has been enormous pressure to make travel-to-work expenses tax deductible. The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) gave that away when he talked about people going to work in buses provided by employers. That is taxable, and so it should be because it is a very considerable benefit in kind. Governments of both parties have always taken the view that we should not provide tax relief for expenses that enable people to carry out their jobs.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury is under a number of misapprehensions. First, there is no special "nursery tax". The benefit of an employer-subsidised nursery place is subject to income tax in exactly the same way as other benefits in kind provided by an employer. Secondly, it is not a new tax. Such benefits have been within the charging rules since they were first introduced by the Labour party more than 40 years ago. Thirdly, the charge is not in any sense disproportionate because a place at a subsidised workplace nursery can be a very considerable benefit. It can certainly run into hundreds of pounds, and over a year it may be worth more that £1,000 to an employee.

In principle, an employee's tax bill should not be based on the extent to which he is paid in cash or in kind. All employees should be taxed on the same basis. If an employee pays tax on the benefit of child care provided by an employer, that treatment is entirely consistent and fair to the vast majority of employees who have to pay for child care out of taxed income. I do not believe that new clause 9 would be universally welcomed. It would not be welcomed by the many working parents who arrange their own child care and pay for it out of taxed income.

Secondly, the new clause provides only for employees. There would be nothing for the self-employed. There is nothing for employees whose employers provide other forms of assistance with child care, such as making contributions to places in community nurseries or for child-minding. It would provide nothing for families who prefer to leave their children with a relative or child-minder and nothing for families who arrange their affairs so that children can be cared for at home.

The inequities in the Labour party's approach are self-evident. Labour Members are also arguing that we should give tax relief to enable people to be in a position to carry out their job. The tax system has never done that before. We have not done that with expenses for travel to work in the past. There is no reason to believe that the present tax treatment of child care expenses is a barrier to the employment of women with children.

There has been a large increase in the number of women who work and the evidence is that the number of workplace nurseries is growing all the time. Employers are providing such nurseries because they want to recruit labour. We hear about the demographic changes. If employers want to employ married women, they will pay the rate the market demands and ensure that married women are in a position to return to work and are provided with the facilities to enable them to do so. New clause 9 is riddled with anomalies and would be a major inconsistency in the tax system.

Mr. Chris Smith: Our debate on the important new clause has been marked by strong speeches from many of my hon. Friends. It has also been marked by two quite remarkable contributions from the hon. Members for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). Both of them argued for universal nursery education and said that we should propose good nursery education provision for all children. Of course the Labour party agrees with that. We have been arguing that for many a long year and——

Mr. Walden: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: No, because time is short.

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: Conservative Members support a Government who have done everything in their power to make it difficult for local authorities to provide good nursery education and nursery provision for the under-fives. I am pleased and proud to say that all the 24 top local authorities in terms of the provision of nursery education are Labour controlled. They are the authorities which provide good quality nursery education.

We should be looking, of course, for universal provision. It would be a range of provision provided by

[Mr. Smith]

local authorities, voluntary agencies and employers as well. Simply to say that Labour is interested only in workplace nurseries provided by employers is wholly to misinterpret and misunderstand what we are arguing. We are arguing clearly for the removal of the tax on workplace nurseries as part of the overall solution to the problem of inadequate childcare. It is not the whole answer, but it is part of the answer and it would be a step along the road to improvement.

The Financial Secretary put two arguments. First, he said that there was no such thing as a relief for expenses to put oneself into a position to do a job. If that is so, I must ask him why on earth clauses 50, 51 and 52 are included in the Bill. They provide precisely such a relief for expenses to put oneself into a position to do a job. We are asking only for the same treatment for mothers who have to take up a workplace nursery place to enable them to do a job.

Secondly, the Financial Secretary said that workplace nursery provision was treated in exactly the same way as other benefits. When it is treated in the same way as subsidised canteens, sports grounds and business lunches, we shall agree with him, but such benefits are not subject to the tax to which workplace nursery provision is subject.

We are arguing for the simple removal of a tax which acts as a disincentive to women playing their full part in our economy. Not only does it discourage women from playing a part by going to work; it deprives children by preventing them from gaining the full experience from which they might otherwise benefit.

The real face of the Conservative party was revealed by the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), who said that there should be a financial incentive for mothers to stay at home. We strongly disagree. We want to ensure that more women can join the work force and play a full part in our national life if they want to, and the new clause represents a small step towards achieving that goal.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 200, Noes 273.

Division No. 293] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael

Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'th's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the debate that has just finished, the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) made an unwarranted attack on me without giving me notice that he intended to do so. His attack was wholly unjustified. The archaic views that he attributed to me have never been mine and have never been expressed by me. Perhaps he will come to the Dispatch Box and apologise.

Mr. Chris Smith: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is entirely correct. I mistook him for the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), although how I could have done so I fail to understand. My mistake reflected badly on the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). As you know,

[Mr. Chris Smith]

Mr. Speaker, I have already apologised to you and sent a note to *Hansard* to ensure that the record of my intentions is correct.

Mr. Speaker: On that happy note, we should move on.

New Clause 18

SPECIAL CAR TAX

'All motor vehicles subject to the 10 per cent special car tax shall when sold with exhaust systems complying with the relevant EC Directive on emission standards be eligible for a rebate of up to 20 per cent of the said special car tax.'.—*[Mr. Roger King.]*

Brought up, and read the first time.

10.15 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Environmental matters give rise to much concern these days and have attracted a wide range of attention and many remedies as how best to tackle the challenge that they pose. One of the foremost examples of our determination to tackle some of the problems of the environment is the introduction of lead-free petrol, which is now widely supported and used by most motorists—probably as a result of the financial incentives that the Government have seen fit to introduce, amounting now to about 10p per gallon. About 20 per cent. of the motoring population now use lead-free petrol, and I warmly welcome that.

There is a great deal of argument about how effective this simple measure has been in reducing pollution. A few years ago it became a requirement to remove most of the lead from leaded petrol anyway, but we shall all reap the benefits from this small but significant step forward. There is no doubt that encouragement in the form of a reduction in the price of petrol has played a significant part in persuading the motorist to make the change.

The introduction of lead-free petrol is a small step along the road to an environmentally cleaner atmosphere. European legislation is making it mandatory for most cars built after 1992—we brought that date forward by one year—to have catalytic systems fitted to their exhaust systems to remove further exhaust impurities. That has been agreed by all the member states and there is nothing now to stop us fitting those systems to cars as early as we can. Some countries within the European Community have already done so, notably Germany, which has been seeking in the past few years to change to cars equipped with those exhaust emission control devices by offering very strong financial incentives to the purchasers of cars fitted with them.

The increase in the cost of the vehicle when fitted with proper exhaust emission devices is significant. Of course, it will vary depending upon the size of the engine fitted, but it will, for instance, cost about £289 to fit a single stage catalyst on the exhaust system of a Rover Group Mini, whereas on bigger cars it will cost much more, and sums of £800 have been commonly put about as being the extra cost involved.

New clause 18 gives further encouragement to the purchasers to specify that they want cars fitted with the catalytic devices sooner than when required under the European legislation. Most United Kingdom manufacturers can produce cars with those exhaust systems fitted—which, of course, they will have to do in any case within a short period. There is no need for us to delay any further. We need not wait until 1992. We can start to sell those cars now. In fact, many manufacturers are already offering cars fitted with such devices. However, customers have to pay a penalty for cleaning up the atmosphere and playing their part in reducing exhaust emissions.

Surely a Government who have taken such a significant lead in environmental measures and in reducing the price of lead-free petrol would wish to extend that lead into encouraging the fitting of these far more elaborate devices to cars so as to tackle the problems of pollution once and for all. Some of us would take the view that we were merely moving the goalposts a little, because even with catalytic converters all that cars do is to convert various poisonous gases into so-called harmless carbon dioxide. Yet we all know that the carbon dioxide build-up in our atmosphere, which is possibly creating the greenhouse effect, is probably just as disadvantageous as other exhaust emissions which occur without catalytic converters being fitted to cars. Nevertheless, it is a step in the right direction as carbon dioxide is significantly less damaging to the environment than other pollutants that come out of car exhaust systems.

If we offer that modest financial incentive of 20 per cent. of the special car tax, which is a penalty that the British car purchaser has to pay, that would be a small but not insignificant factor in encouraging motorists to specify that catalytic converters be fitted to their cars when they buy them. The special car tax is something that the motor industry imagined—perhaps in error—was to be a short-term measure when the original purchase tax was phased out. The Government of the day decided that they wished to maintain their revenue and introduced a 10 per cent. car tax. On top of that, 15 per cent. value added tax was added. The motor industry has long hoped that that special car tax, which is more or less unique within Europe, would be phased out gradually over the years so that we could establish a regime of taxation on motor vehicles similar to that which obtains throughout most of the European Community. As 1992 approaches, of course we shall wish to harmonise our tax regime with those in the rest of Europe.

The rebate is a small step, but on a £10,000 car the sort of concession that the new clause advocates would cost perhaps £200. It would cost, for instance, £289 to fit a catalytic converter to a Mini. By allowing that 20 per cent. on the special car tax, the Government will in effect be giving the consumer £80 to encourage him or her to buy a car fitted with a converter. That is not a generous amount, but it is a significant indicator that when it comes to environmental issues the Government mean business.

Such a sweeping change may mean that the Government will have to consider at length the desirability of adopting such a measure, which would be widely encouraged by the motor industry. Many European car manufacturers already fit catalytic exhaust systems—certainly they do in Germany—and if British manufacturers could be encouraged to fit them sooner rather than later, economies of scale would be geared up for the time when the fitting of such devices is mandatory, in 1992. The Government should consider carefully this modest

measure, which carries on from the bold initiative of reducing the cost of lead-free petrol and should be widely supported.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Now is not the time, although certainly it is the place, to debate the motor industry's detailed complaints about the special car tax and the way that the industry has, in its view, been singled out for the most unfair and prejudicial treatment. I shall not rehearse those arguments, except in supporting my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), whose initiative in proposing the new clause I value highly, as it makes a significant contribution to the debate on motor vehicle pollution.

Value added tax is based on the basic price of the car plus the special car tax, so it is a tax on a tax. As we move towards 1992 and the approximation of motor vehicle taxation, I shall use the debate on the proposed new clause to explore the mind of my hon. Friend the Minister as to how the future motor vehicle tax regime will operate. The Commission proposes that we should move to a regime of value added taxes and dispense with other and, in many cases, higher taxes. The suggestion is that value added tax should be levied at the rate applying in the purchaser's country, which would be determined by the vehicle's country of registration.

Britain's special car tax is a form of sales tax and should be included in the VAT, which may need to be adjusted for that purpose. As we move towards 1992, it is important to decide how motor vehicle taxation is to operate. Manufacturers need to proceed on the basis of certain assumptions, because their model policy is determined some years in advance.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northfield referred eloquently to the environmental benefits of catalytic converters, to the precedent set by the lower excise on unleaded petrol, and to the efforts of other European countries—notably West Germany—to expedite the fitting of converters. There has been a good deal of propaganda from catalytic converter manufacturers that their cost is not at all what others state it to be, and that it has been greatly exaggerated. It is a matter not just of the cost of the metal in the catalyst box. One cannot run a catalyst without an engine management system, which is where a large element of the expenditure comes, quite apart from the later costs to the consumer arising from maintenance and fitment.

There is much uncertainty about the cost of maintaining the catalysts and their lifespan. On a recent visit to a car manufacturer that had fitted catalysts, I was given lifespans ranging from 25,000 miles to 100,000 miles. There is much uncertainty about the frequency with which they need to be replaced. It is worth bearing in mind that they cannot be serviced; they must be junked and then one starts again. That means taking off the whole exhaust system, and those of us who have had to replace those systems know what is involved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northfield and I are trying to encourage our friends in the Government to consider the introduction of some incentive in the shape of a reduction in the additional cost incurred by fitting catalysts. We carefully did not pitch the amount of the incentive but gave a band that could be considered. Such an incentive would encourage the earlier and wider use of catalysts. It would be for the benefit of the environment and would be a powerful incentive for our manufacturers to bring themselves up to date on a fully competitive continental basis.

10.30 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). The Opposition would welcome it if he put his name down for the Finance Bill Committee next year. We have discussions year in, year out on excise duties and other taxation on vehicles and not a Conservative Back Bencher who has any knowledge of the subject will stand up and take issue with us so that we can make the policies and duties better suited to Britain. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take that request seriously.

The hon. Gentleman is wrong when he says that the Government mean business on environmental issues. If it had been left to the Government, we would not have had an agreement on catalytic converters or clean car engines. That was forced on the Government by the European Community, and we must get that point clear.

The Opposition are passionately pro-environment, and we sympathise with the basic aim of the new clause. We take issue, however, with the method chosen. As we must change our exhaust systems and introduce catalytic converters in a few years' time, what is the point of having an incentive? I do not understand the rationale behind the speeches of the hon. Members for Northfield and for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller). The incentive is unnecessary.

The difficulty is—I am sure that the Economic Secretary will say the same—that if an allowance is made for catalytic converters, the Treasury will be inundated with pleas for allowances for all sorts of additions to cars. Many kinds of transport systems will be fair game for different people with different interests.

Sir Hal Miller: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but the logic of his argument escapes me. I do not recollect his opposing the incentive of the reduction in the excise duty to encourage the greater use of lead-free petrol. I am sorry if, in my anxiety to be quick, I did not make it plain that the purpose of the new clause is to speed up the introduction of catalysts.

Dr. Marek: The two issues are very different. There is always a choice between leaded and unleaded petrol, at least for some cars. I have recently seen something called "super leaded" in garages. It costs the same as unleaded, but I wonder whether petrol companies will continue to rip off motorists by charging high prices.

There is no question of providing an incentive to fit catalytic converters. It has to be done. We have agreed it with the EC. There are cases for incentives in certain circumstances, but they should be argued on their merits. I regret that I have to say that I do not think that the case has been proven here. I would rather that the money which would be lost to the Treasury were spent on other environmental concerns.

How much does the Economic Secretary think the Treasury would lose if the new clause were accepted? Can he think of better environmental uses for the money? I sympathise with the new clause, but I think that it is the wrong approach.

Mr. Lilley: I am sure that the House joins me in paying tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) and for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller),

[Mr. Lilley]

who have always been lively advocates of the interests of the British motor car industry and who today have wedded that interest to their concern for the environment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northfield mentioned the success of the increased reliefs and changes in the treatment of two-star petrol in the Budget. It has been immensely successful—more successful than I expected at the time. The latest figures, at 14 June, show that unleaded petrol sales account for 20·6 per cent. of the whole as compared with only 5·5 per cent. the month before the Budget, and that more than 50 per cent. of filling stations sell it as against about 22 per cent. earlier this year.

My hon. Friend drew an analogy between that and the tax relief proposed in new clause 18, but I do not think that the analogy is valid. Excise duty applies to all cars, not just new ones, and there is no mandatory use of unleaded petrol in the offing. Those are my reasons for suggesting that the House should not accept the new clause. The benefit that is proposed offers a remission of an element of car tax which is levied only on new cars. The incentive would therefore apply only to the installation of catalytic converters in new cars. In 1992, however, such installation will be compulsory for all new cars sold in the EC, and I imagine that before then it will be normal for them to be fitted as producers gear up with new models. We are being asked to introduce a tax relief for a short time only, and one which applies only to new cars. Tax reliefs should always be introduced with caution and I am not minded to recommend to the House a relief with a short life and relatively little coverage.

Both my hon. Friends, but especially my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove, mentioned their resentment at the existence of a special car tax. At least 10 EC countries have a higher rate of value added tax, or a registration tax, if not a special car tax like ours, so the tax is by no means abnormal. Our VAT and the special car tax is similar to what is charged in other countries.

Sir Hal Miller: While my hon. Friend is dealing with the practice of our EEC partners, will he answer my question about what is to happen in future? Will the car tax be subsumed in VAT?

Mr. Lilley: I apologise for not responding to that specific point without prompting. The Commissioner has put forward proposals which are being considered by the Government. They acknowledge that special consideration will have to be given to items such as car tax on motor vehicles. The general presumption is that they would be rendered uniform. However, we have tried to work out proposals in general which will not require central bureaucratic determination of tax rates in individual countries and will leave as much discretion to individual countries as possible while removing any unnecessary fiscal controls at frontiers. That is the line that we are pushing, but we are a long way from achieving the unanimity that is required on that issue in the Community.

The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) asked what the proposal would cost. It would cost about £3 million in revenue forgone for every 1 per cent. of motor cars which took advantage of the incentive and had the equipment fitted. Obviously, one has no idea how many would do so, but as 1992 approached a great many cars would be so fitted, not in response to the incentive but in anticipation of the time when it would become mandatory. We should thus have to bear the cost with no extra benefit. That is one reason why I am not urging the House to accept the new clause.

We accept that the new clause seeks to encourage producers and car drivers to recognise the value of such equipment from an environmental point of view and seriously to consider voluntarily insisting on their incorporation in any new vehicle which they may buy ahead of 1992. I welcome that spirit, but I hope that the new clause will not be pressed to a vote.

Mr. Roger King: I have listened, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) will have done, with a great deal of interest in the hope that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary would give us some encouragement to the effect that our proposals met with some enthusiasm. I understand the problems of introducing a further tax incentive such as this. The aim of the new clause was simply to give some added impetus to what will obviously happen anyway in 1992. It would have shown clearly that we wished to proceed faster rather than slower along the lines of the EEC proposal.

Despite the unbridled optimism of my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove and myself that we would have the Opposition's support in this matter, it is clear that they have no bottle for a fight on this. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the new clause.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 20

FIRST-YEAR ALLOWANCES FOR SHIPS

'In paragraph 2(1) of Schedule 12 to the Finance Act 1984 after sub-paragraph (b) there shall be inserted the following sub-paragraphs:—

"(c) with respect to capital expenditure incurred on or after 1st April 1989 on the provision of ships, the words 'one-half';

and before the words 'no first-year allowances' there shall be added the words 'subject to sub-paragraph (c) above'.

(d) in its application to capital expenditure incurred on or after 1st April 1989 on the provision of ships section 44(4)(a) of the Finance Act 1971 shall have effect as if the word 'or' at the end of sub-paragraph (i) were omitted and as if sub-paragraph (ii) were omitted.".'.—*[Mr. Shore.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I know that new clause 20 has support in all quarters of the House. That is self-evident from the names of the right hon. and hon. Members who have joined me in tabling it. Anxiety about the disastrous decline of the British merchant fleet has been expressed in the Chamber on many occasions in recent years. No fewer than 234 hon. Members have put their names to early-day motion 429 which, among other things, urges

"the primary importance, with an ageing fleet, of the early provision of fiscal and other measures to encourage British shipping companies to undertake the substantial re-investment in ships which will be needed if the decline of the British-owned and controlled merchant fleet is not to accelerate again over the years immediately ahead."

New clause 20 proposes the reintroduction of a 50 per cent. first-year allowance for capital expenditure on new ships. The much-reduced British-owned shipping fleet is steadily aging, and assistance with the heavy cost of replacement is essential if we are to avoid a further decline, let alone reverse the trend of the past decade or so.

10.45 pm

With a record Budget surplus that is likely to be repeated—certainly this year—I do not think that the cost is of real concern to the Treasury. According to the Inland Revenue's own gloomy estimates, with which the Select Committee on Transport was provided last year, the cost of an additional 50 per cent. investment allowance was expected to rise to a maximum of £200 million a year for a two-year period, and then to decline to about £90 million by 1995-96. Our proposal is more modest: it is not additional to the existing 25 per cent. allowance, but in place of it. That will cost not £200 million a year at the peak, but more like £140 million.

The principal objection rehearsed by Treasury spokesmen on previous occasions when help for the shipping industry has been discussed is that the introduction of investment allowances runs counter to the general thrust of the Government's corporation tax policy, the general effect of which has been to reduce the rate of corporation tax on profits substantially and at the same time to abolish allowances against capital expenditure. I do not propose to challenge that general philosophy tonight, but I should like to state as strongly as I can why I believe that shipping should be the exception to the corporation tax rule.

First, world shipping markets are not free. Governments intervene, in varying degrees, in capital and crew costs, and many reserve some part of their trade for their own nationals. Third world countries have their own special shipping regime; the Soviet Union, eastern Europe and China subsidise their shipping on a massive scale; the United States protects its own merchant navy. In the European Community there is no common shipping policy. Most European Community countries assist their own shipping industries with many forms of subsidies, grants, tax concessions and the like. Let me give just one example: German shipowners have the benefit of accelerated depreciation, investment grants and very low interest rates. Not surprisingly, there is twice as much tonnage on order for the West German register as for the United Kingdom register today.

There is, therefore, no level playing field in European or world shipping. To refrain from assisting our own shipping industry with its replacement costs is not to operate a hands-off, non-interventionist policy, but positively to discriminate against our own shipping. It is a profound paradox that the United Kingdom, an island nation more dependent on shipping for its imports and exports than any other European country, should—virtually alone among the west European nations—offer no protection or assistance to its merchant fleet.

My second reason for urging the Government to accept the new clause is the direct contribution that British-owned shipping makes to the country's overseas earnings. When the 1984 Budget removed the British shipping industry's main tax incentives to invest, the balance of payments was remarkably healthy. Unhappily, that is no longer the case. We now face massive deficits. The shipping industry is still a major earner of foreign exchange—the third largest invisible earner after financial services and tourism—and there is a close correlation between its foreign exchange earnings and the size of the fleet. An enlarged United Kingdom-owned fleet would generate, or save, much of the additional foreign exchange that the country so badly needs.

My third reason is that our Merchant Navy is essential to the nation's defence during a period of tension or war. It gives direct support to the military, it is essential for the rapid reinforcement of Europe from North America, and is crucial for the continuing economic re-supply of the civil population and industry in a period of conflict. The United Kingdom fleet has already shrunk to a level where all three tasks can no longer be undertaken. This was broadly the conclusion of the Select Committee on Defence in its report last year and is the subject now of a major NATO study.

There is one other negative argument that the Minister may be tempted to deploy: that investment allowances, before their abolition in 1984, did not prevent the rapid rundown of the United Kingdom's Merchant Navy. True; but it is difficult to think of any measure that would have prevented a substantial decline in United Kingdom and, indeed, in world shipping in the decade of severe recession that is now ending.

At the end of 1985, the year after the abolition of capital investment allowances, 7·5 per cent. of world shipping was laid up. Today that figure is down to 1 per cent. Freight rates are improving; shipbuilding capacity has, tragically, been sharply reduced; the world fleet is aging; and it is clear that a large part of the existing world fleet will have to be replaced over the next decade.

The effects of this can be seen in the sharp rise in the price of both new and second-hand ships. The key question for the shipping entrepreneur is how the

[Mr. Peter Shore]

enormous capital costs of replacement can be financed —which depends in turn on the fiscal régimes applied by the Government for such investment, because this is the major variable in capital costs.

We have now a major opportunity to revive our merchant fleet. Strengthening the incentives to invest in ships will enable the United Kingdom to gain a substantial share of new shipping to overcome the handicaps of unfair competition, to strengthen the balance of payments and to help maintain the credibility of our defences against the threat of conventional war.

The maintenance of a large, modern and efficient Merchant Navy is essential to the well-being and security of an island nation. I do not believe that the Government would dispute that assertion. I urge them therefore to accept the proposal in new clause 20.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): I support the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). He has pointed out the importance of the shipping industry to our invisible earnings. I have no vested interests in the shipping industry. The United Kingdom is unable to compete with other countries in many ways. At one time the shipping industry benefited from the free depreciation allowance, but it has now disappeared. The 25 per cent. depreciation allowance has taken its place.

I well understand why my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury will say that because corporation tax has been reduced to its present level capital allowances must be reduced, too. The shipping industry, however, is in a slightly different position. It is one of the most competitive international commodities, if it be a commodity, that there is. Shipowners in other member states of the European Community are provided with far better allowances.

The new clause provides for a 50 per cent. capital allowance. There would be no loss of revenue. The shipping industry faces a cash flow problem. If one cannot obtain a capital allowance of 50 per cent., the capital that is required to buy a ship will put British shipowners at a disadvantage vis-à-vis their foreign competitors. In 1992 the United Kingdom's capital allowances will probably be the least advantageous of all.

The Government should take another look at shipping. It may be too late at Report stage of this Finance Bill to do something about it, but I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will give some assurance that the Government are seized of the importance of the shipping industry and are aware that our competitors are far more generous to their shipping industries than we are, although our corporation tax has decreased.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the surplus in our domestic budget. I am not suggesting that we should spend that, but the shipping industry has a cash flow problem. If our shipowners could buy a ship with a 50 per cent. rather than a 25 per cent. allowance, it would put the nation in a better competitive position. I urge my right hon. Friend to consider the new clause sympathetically.

The size of our merchant fleet has continued to decrease and I can give the statistics to show that. As an island nation we depend on our shipping industry for more than our defence. Let us encourage British shipping rather than allow foreign shipowners to move our goods in and out of our ports because they have better fiscal arrangements than we have. For those reasons, I support the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): As is often the case, we find ourselves late at night discussing important matters, but if the hour is late, the quality of the first two speeches makes up for it. I am honoured to follow the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark).

I used to work as a management consultant and many of my clients were shipyards. As I spoke at length in Committee I shall add only a few brief points. Other countries provide advantages for their shipping industries in many ways that we do not. Besides the visible methods of assistance, including capital allowances, tax-free reserves, advantages in personal taxation to seafarers, and direct Government subsidies and grants, which together ensure that we have a higher effective rate of tax on shipping, whatever the nominal rate, than most other countries, there are three hidden ones.

First, safety is expensive and many of our competitors are not interested in it. That immediately gives an unavoidable handicap to our shipowners because no one wants dangerous British ships. Secondly, some seafarers in foreign merchant navies are disgracefully badly paid. That is another unavoidable handicap for us. Thirdly, considerable amounts of cargo reservations are sometimes legally enforced and at other times achieved through back-door arrangements.

Our shipowners operate with considerable fiscal and other handicaps. It is sad that as a result of those considerable handicaps the British merchant fleet has not only declined—nearly every merchant fleet has—but declined compared with other fleets. The Greeks have by far the biggest fleet in Europe, but there is no taxation on Greek shipowners, except a minuscule tonnage tax.

I share the Government's distaste for capital allowances as a normal medium for industry. I wrote a pamphlet calling for the abolition of capital allowances and all forms of regional capital grants some years before it became the fashion. However, it seems to me inescapable that shipping is a special case. If we want to restore British shipping to even part of its former standing, we must face up to these handicaps and to the enormous difference between the way in which we treat our shipowners and the way in which other countries treat theirs.

11 pm

I do not want to go into all the reasons why it is important to restore shipping, because they have already been well covered by the two previous speakers, but I will mention two reasons briefly. First, besides the immediate effects of shipping, there are many peripheral areas that bring in considerable foreign exchange, such as the Baltic exchange and the shipping insurance side of Lloyd's. They require a captive domestic market if they are to continue to bring in the considerable export earnings they bring in at present, which are over and above the export earnings mentioned for shipping itself.

Secondly, I echo again the defence considerations—my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary would be surprised if I did not—which are real. The arrival of the NATO report on strategic shipping is becoming rather like the second coming. However, it will come at some point

and it is common knowledge that it is certain to show that NATO has insufficient for its needs in times of tension, let alone war.

I sum up by saying that two early-day motions—one in the previous Parliament and one in this—have shown that the majority of Back Benchers of all political persuasions are concerned about the issue. Two Select Committees—on Transport and on Defence—have expressed real worries on the matter. I put it to my right hon. Friend that if he finds new clause 20 unacceptable for one reason or another, we must look at what we can do for our shipping. If we stand back and do nothing and, in effect, say unilaterally that we believe in the free market and not in intervention—while almost every other country with a significant fleet is intervening and supporting its fleet—the little temporary recovery we have in shipping, which gives us a bit of a breathing space, will disappear and our merchant fleet will continue to decline.

Sir Charles Morrison (Devizes): It may be surprising that an hon. Member representing a wholly land-locked, largely rural constituency receives two or three letters a year expressing concern about the inadequate size of our merchant fleet, yet that is my lot. I have several constituents who are still well aware that we are an island race and that we depend to a considerable extent for our existence on shipping and overseas trade. If our country were a vast, land-locked area which was entirely self-supporting, we could perhaps disregard the need for a merchant fleet and even go further and say to ourselves that not having a merchant fleet of our own would help developing countries. That concept, however, does not exist for us. As my hon. Friends the Members for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) and for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) and the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) have pointed out, we are all aware that we remain an island. We may soon be attached more closely to continental Europe by means of the Channel tunnel, but a huge proportion of the basis of our national existence will still depend on shipping.

I do not think that my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary can argue that a merchant fleet is unnecessary. Indeed, he has not argued that. As my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South pointed out, it is important in terms of allowances that we should be able to compete with the assistance that shipping receives in other countries. There has been a pretty continuous deterioration in the size of our merchant fleet. That in my view is shameful, but, regardless of that, I believe that from a strategic point of view we are putting ourselves in an increasingly weak and dangerous position.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will take full account of the new clause. For all I know, it may not be properly drafted and may need further thought, but I hope that my right hon. Friend will at least express some sympathy with the proposition behind it.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) was right to remind the House of the strategic importance of shipping and, indeed, shipbuilding to our country. As a number of hon. Members have perceptively pointed out, our country is an island, and the conveyance of goods by sea is therefore important to us—indeed, 92 per cent. of our trade is carried in ships. I should have thought that it was fairly clear to everybody, therefore, that shipping has a unique place in our island's economy. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney asks the Treasury to recognise that unique place. I suspect that the Treasury will not do so. I say that because we have explored this matter before.

Help for shipping, needed though it is, is not the same as help for domestic shipbuilding, needed though that is. Although the EEC has no common policy on shipping, it certainly has one on shipbuilding. That is embodied in the sixth directive on shipbuilding, which provides for intervention funding for some merchant yards in the different member states.

The new clause would not necessarily mean that those who availed themselves of the tax concession would order new vessels in British yards, because they could purchase abroad or purchase secondhand ships. The new clause would not necessarily help the domestic merchant shipbuilding industry, which is certainly in need of help. Just about the only chance of survival for our merchant shipbuilding industry lies in relocating to Northern Ireland.

The shipping industry is deserving and worthy of support, and the new clause has considerable merit. I was taken by the statement of the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) that he had acted as a consultant for a number of shipyards. That alone does not explain the serious crisis that British shipbuilding faces; the explanation has to be sought elsewhere. I am able to name the guilty man—the man responsible for closing down merchant yards when he was at the Department of Trade and Industry and for starving warship yards of defence orders when he was Minister of State for Defence Procurement. That man is, of course, the Financial Secretary, and he will no doubt reply to the debate by telling the shipping industry that it will not receive the assistance that every hon. Member who has spoken in the debate says it so badly requires.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) has a long-standing interest in shipping and speaks with great authority. Some months ago, he came to see me about a specific tax matter, which might have been dealt with in this Bill. The right hon. Gentleman argued vigorously against the proposal because of the effects that he thought it might have on the shipping industry. Having listened to representations from the right hon. Gentleman and others, we decided not to proceed with that tax change. I hope that that experience will at least have confirmed him in the view that we try to listen and are not indifferent to the plight of the United Kingdom shipping industry.

The new clause would introduce a special 50 per cent. first year allowance for capital expenditure incurred on or after 1 April 1989 in the provision of a ship, whether new or second hand. It would permit also a writing-down allowance to be taken for the same period, thus providing allowances totalling 62½ per cent. in the year of acquisition instead of the 25 per cent. that would otherwise normally be available.

As the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney well knows, the issue of accelerated depreciation for ships is by no means new. It was discussed at considerable length in the Finance Bill debates in 1984 and 1985. Clauses with the same objective were tabled in 1986 and 1987. There was a further debate when last year's Finance Bill was considered in Committee, when a nearly

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

exactly similar proposal to that in the new clause was not accepted. As we had the issue raised in almost exactly the same form from 1984 to 1988, it is not surprising that the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney was able to anticipate many of the arguments on which I rely.

We also debated these issues when my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) introduced an amendment that sought that a balancing charge arising on the disposal of a ship should be rolled forward and relieved from tax provided that the proceeds of the disposal were reinvested within up to four years. As the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney has recognised, relief on these would reintroduce to the system a significant measure of accelerated depreciation. The new clause would go further still by allowing the entire cost of a ship to be written down to a residual 10 per cent. over five years or so. As ships are long-life assets with working lives greatly in excess of five years—perhaps 18 to 20 years, on average—a depreciation system that provided allowances on the scale that is proposed would constitute a substantial element of acceleration.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney recognised that our reform of corporation tax is based on the reduction of allowances to 25 per cent. per annum, combined with the reduction in the rate of corporation tax, with the result that the rate of corporation tax is the lowest in Europe and one of the lowest in the industrialised world. That is something that very much affects most industries, including the shipping industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury and I debated these matters extensively when the Bill was being considered in Standing Committee. He argued that perhaps the more marginally profitable shipping industries were better off under a system of allowances than a lower rate of corporation tax combined with smaller allowances. I in turn argued that the Government believe that the purpose of the tax system should be to encourage profitable investment and profitable industries and not merely the marginally profitable or the near loss makers.

Sir William Clark: The fact that these matters were debated from 1984 to 1987 is completely irrelevant. Why is it that the merchant fleet continues to decline? It is far better from a fiscal point of view to have a ship under a foreign flag. Corporation tax is lower here than in many other countries, but the shipping industry is being penalised in Britain when comparisons are made with competitor countries.

Mr. Lamont: I cannot agree with my hon. Friend's analysis. I do not believe that the period of the greatest decline in British shipping, to which the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney referred, was linked to the tax system. The right hon. Gentleman acknowledged that, even when we had 100 per cent. first-year allowances, that did not halt the dramatic decline of the fleet between 1975 and 1986 from 33 million gross registered tonnes to under 11 million tonnes. Fundamental factors—not tax factors—were in operation, and they were connected with excess capacity and, obviously, with the structure of the British fleet. They played a large part in the decline of the fleet during that period when we had 100 per cent. depreciation allowances, and they were unable to stop the decline at the time. There have been structural and capacity factors.

11.15 pm

Sir William Clark: On the 100 per cent. allowance, does my right hon. Friend recollect what our corporation tax was?

Mr. Lamont: People were able to use the 100 per cent. allowance and go on investing, and the actual effective rate of corporation tax was much lower. My hon. Friend is looking extremely puzzled. I am not saying that tax matters are unimportant or have no part to play, but the decline of the British fleet has been due to much more deep-seated reasons than tax alone.

Mr. Brazier: My right hon. Friend is absolutely correct, but his remark does not detract from the new clause. Surely the reasons for the great decline which occurred in every merchant fleet in the world in the 1970s were the deep-seated factors of overcapacity and overinvestment to which my right hon. Friend referred. Now that we have come out of that period of overcapacity, which the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) described, the precise reason why other fleets are now expanding while the British one is static—and we are falling as a percentage of the EEC fleet—is this country's fiscal factors, which are different from those in other countries.

Mr. Lamont: That is open to argument if we say that the reduction in the fleet in the past was due to non-tax reasons, but today we believe that it is due to tax reasons. I do not believe that our tax system leaves shipping at a massive disadvantage. We must look at the tax system in the round. We must compare allowances and rates and also look at local taxes. We must look at the overall fiscal position of one country compared with another. It is not proven that British shipping is at a tax advantage compared with all its competitors. I have given my view of the fundamental factors that have been responsible for the decline in shipping. I do not believe that one can suddenly say that they are different, even though those were the reasons for the decline in the past.

Sir Charles Morrison: My right hon. Friend is missing the point. He is speaking from the Government Front Bench. I put it bluntly that there is no point in arguing a Treasury brief. Hon. Members are concerned about the steady decline in the British merchant fleet. That is what perhaps surprisingly concerns my constituents. They are more and more worried that we are living on an island and our merchant fleet is getting smaller and smaller, as my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) pointed out. We probably could not even mount a Falklands-type campaign. The situation is getting worse, not better. It is all very well arguing the details from the Treasury Bench, but the Government must consider whether or not we are to have a merchant fleet. What is the answer to that?

Mr. Lamont: I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Sir. C. Morrison) if I sound too like a Treasury Minister. I have great difficulty in disguising myself on occasions. It is difficult to disguise myself when I am replying to comments about tax and the Finance Bill.

It is utterly astonishing that I should sound like a Treasury Minister. I apologise unreservedly to my hon. Friend for the disguise that I have put on.

Of course, I accept what my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes has said about the strategic importance of merchant shipping and about the importance of the British merchant fleet for defence reasons. My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury raised that in Standing Committee when we discussed his amendments. I assured him that we shall bear in mind the recommendations and remarks of the Select Committee on Defence and that the matter will be kept under review. I shall draw the attention of my colleagues in both the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Transport to what has been said.

The Ministry of Defence very much disagrees with what my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes has said and believes that it would still be possible today to mount an out-of-area operation involving the British fleet. As my hon. Friend has said, I am a mere Treasury Minister and I can assure him that I should not make that statement without having had some advice from those who know about these matters.

I have dealt with the fiscal problems as I see them. It has been said that shipping is a slightly different case. I am afraid that all sorts of industries also regard themselves as different, especially capital-intensive industries and the chemical and engineering industries. Even the film industry has a great attachment to capital allowances. I believe that the lower rate of corporation tax, combined with the lower allowances, has been of great benefit to British industry overall. That does not mean that substantial sectors of heavy industry do not raise these issues all the time, but, despite what my hon. Friends have said, it would be extremely difficult to distinguish between shipping and other industries.

As in the measures that we have taken in other Finance Bills, we have shown here that we are not indifferent to the problems of the shipping industry. Indeed, we made a special relief, through our changes on foreign earnings deductions, to meet some of the problems that had been raised about low-wage seafarers and low-wage competition. We leant over backwards to try to have a tax system that would minimise the disadvantages.

We have also used the business expansion scheme for both chartering and investment in ships. I have already referred to the representations that we received from the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney and to the fact that we have listened to those representations as well as to those from shipping when we discussed residence.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes said, this is not just a tax issue; it is also a defence issue. We are keeping the matter under review, particularly because other Departments are looking at the Select Committee's recommendations. However, I am afraid that, although we will look at the matter in that way, I cannot recommend the acceptance of the new clause, which would go sharply against the thrust of our business tax reforms.

Mr. Shore: I shall not pretend to conceal my disappointment and frustration, but I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 23

CHILD TAX ALLOWANCE

'In relation to income tax there shall be an allowance of £100 for each dependent child in full time education under the age of nineteen'.—*[Mr. Frank Field.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Normally when one moves a new clause, one of the ploys of the Government Front Bench is to point out the inadequacies in the drafting. As I wish to begin and to continue in a conciliatory mood, at least until we get to the vote, any constructive amendments to my draft new clause will be willingly accepted. I am aware that, because of the way in which the new clause is worded, it will exclude children below the school starting age, which was not the intention. An odd amending word could put that right. I am also aware that the present wording does not link the provisions to the Rooker-Wise indexation amendment to which the Chancellor of the Exchequer hyphened his name and I am sure that there are other things on which the Opposition would be only too happy to meet the Government.

I begin by referring briefly to what has been happening to the living standards of families with children and by comparing that with other sections of the community that are childless. To help me to do this, I draw on a note which the Family Policy Studies Centre published today. It looked at two possible ways of measuring how effectively our fiscal and benefit system has looked after those with children. The Government would be right to say that it is wrong to consider the crude tax thresholds because they do not include the tax-free element in child benefit. In place of tax thresholds, the buzz word now is tax break-even points. I do not want to be accused of using an inaccurate measurement, so I shall follow the Government line of break-even points.

There are two clearly discernible trends in the Government's record over the past decade. I am sure, first, that the Minister will emphasise that the break-even point for all households, whatever their composition, has risen. That has not always been so in the post-war period. But a second pattern emerges from breakdown into households of differing composition. The break-even points have risen faster for those without children than for those with them. So, although the tax burden has been lifted from households that pay tax, it has been lifted most slowly from people with children. The Government have changed the tax burden overall, but it has moved in the past 10 years.

The Government would also be right to tell us—and Conservative Members who support the new clause—that examining the tax burden is an inadequate way of judging the Government's record on families. We need to look at households' real income, and include transfer payments. The second calculation contained in the briefing note, prepared, needless to say, by the Library, considers the real income of households of different sizes. It also shows an improvement for all households, but differences between those with and those without children. Real income of those not responsible for children have risen faster.

In the past, the House has had two ways of dealing with the tax burden on and the benefit advantages for families with children. First, we had child tax allowances, then

[Mr. Frank Field]

child benefit. When the Government made their past two uprating statements, I noticed that some Conservative Members said that, had child tax allowances existed still, the Government would not have got their statements through on a vote. Conservatives would have voted for the reintroduction and increasing of child tax allowances.

The Government have made it as plain as they can that they will not increase child benefit this side of the next election. The Opposition can therefore go in for gesture politics and insist at every uprating statement that child benefit should be increased, knowing that it will not be. We can then withdraw with our feathers in the air, knowing that families will get nothing. Or we can act more seriously and say that the challange to the Government will grow during this Parliament if they do not uprate child benefit in line with the other tax allowances and benefits that affect the living standards of the people who depend on them.

I want real, not gesture, politics to prevail. Should we be successful tonight, a future radical Labour Government would be free to move any revenue lost from child tax allowances over to child benefit during their first year of office. In the meantime, we would protect the living standards of families with children, and keep open the option of moving the money over to the child benefit scheme at a later date. That is not a change in direction, but it is one of seeking immediate ways to improve the living standards of families and also to have the option at a later stage of moving those resources over to the child benefit scheme.

It will not have escaped some hon. Members' attention that before Parliament rises for the summer recess we will be dealing with amendments to the Social Security Bill from the other place, and one of those amendments links child benefit increases to changes in family credit. I am, therefore, anxious that we decide tonight whether the House wishes to go down the road of reintroducing child tax allowances to protect the living standards of families with children or whether, when we come to the vote on the Lords amendment in a week or so, all the energies of those who are interested in ensuring that the House represents the interests of households with children will be supporting the amendment that has been made in the other place.

Families with children will win either way tonight. We will either carry this amendment in the Lobby, which will mean that we will see the reintroduction of child tax allowances, and that the tax burden will therefore be diminished, or——

11.30 pm

Mr. Walden: I ask the hon. Gentleman a question to which I genuinely want an answer. There are people on middle or upper incomes who have had their taxes reduced from 60 to 40 per cent., who are liable to have their rates reduced as a result of the community charge, who still benefit from higher rate mortgage tax relief and who benefit from the non-imposition of VAT on children's shoes, even though they could afford to pay it. Does what the hon. Gentleman is suggesting put yet more money into the pockets of such people?

Mr. Field: It does, because we are looking at different forms of the distribution of the tax burden. We are looking at it both horizontally and vertically. One way is to look at which income groups get relief right up to the income scale and the other is to look at each level of income and to study how the tax burden varies between people who have children and those who have not. We are maintaining both points. The hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) is shaking his head, but the irony is that it was his intervention during one of the speeches on uprating, when he said that the Government would be in real difficulties in getting this package through if there were child tax allowances, which set my mind working.

Mr. Walden: It was not me.

Mr. Field: I apologise if it was not the hon. Gentleman and I shall happily withdraw that comment.

I shall get back to my final point. Families with children will win either way tonight. We will either carry this amendment in the Division Lobby and thereby affect the tax burden of all families with children, whether they be rich or poor, or the House will have made the clear decision that it does not wish to go down that road and, therefore, when the amendment to the Social Security Bill comes back from the other place, there will be no parting of the ways and no arguments put to divert us from the need to ensure that child benefit is regularly uprated.

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): I support the new clause, which has been so cogently moved by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). We are debating justice between different classes of taxpayers and not the micro or macro economic situation. If we were, I would find myself in some difficulty, because I am in favour of increasing taxes at the present time and not reducing them. I believe that only by increasing taxation can we solve our serious economic problems. However, the Government do not agree with me, so that removes that difficulty.

Anyway, I am not altogether confident that we shall win the vote tonight, because the Government probably have the support of enough of my right hon. and hon. Friends who have not heard the debate to defeat the motion. Besides, we are discussing a question of principle as between taxpayers.

Ever since the days of William Pitt, it has been recognised that people with families have higher expenses and more responsibilities than people who do not. The salary system does not, for very understandable reasons, recognise that distinction, so clearly it must be made by the tax system. Much the best way of doing that is through child benefit, but the Government repudiate that on specious, irresponsible and thoroughly inhumane grounds —at a time when they lavish tax cuts on the well-offs and on everyone else.

My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) jibs at people receiving more money through tax allowances for children but, as far as I know, he and other right hon. and hon. Members—myself included—do not jib at tax cuts that give infinitely more money to the people who concern him. With great respect to my hon. Friend, he does not make a serious point.

The best way of dealing with families with children is through child benefit, but the Government appear to be anxious to repudiate that argument, judging by their behaviour over the past two years. We are giving the Government a choice. Unless they are against families—tout seul, full stop—they must agree either to uprate child benefit in future or to adopt new clause 23. There is no other choice. Otherwise, the Government will be

repudiating the experience of everyday life and saying that there is no horizontal difference between taxpayers of similar income.

Either the Government must come out in favour of child tax allowances, or say, "We thoroughly agree that we behaved very badly, or not very well, over child benefit, and we shall never do that again." If the Government will say that, then of course I will not support the new clause in the Lobby tonight. I have a feeling that the Government will not say that, in which case I shall support new clause 23. Either the Government are in favour of child tax allowances or they are in favour of child benefit. To say that they are against both would be totally irresponsible and quite indefensible.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): In supporting the new clause, I say at the outset that I did not think that I would ever again speak in this House in support of the reintroduction of child tax allowances. Over a period of 10 years, it was mooted that child benefit was not such a success, and before the 1987 general election there was a catching-up period when child benefit was put back on the rails. My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) reminded me of the real reasons why in 1977 I and my then hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East, now my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise), did not include tax allowances in our Finance Bill indexation clause relating to personal tax allowances. We took the view then that as child tax allowances were being phased out and would disappear within two years it would be ridiculous to incorporate them in new legislation.

In 1977, child benefit was being phased in with all-party support, with increasing commitments from right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House, including the then Tory Opposition, that child benefit would be viewed just as though it was a tax allowance—which it was, in part—and in terms both of its value and spending power. The point was made that the Finance Bill should not be used to index-link what was then a social security benefit.

As the years passed, it was clear that child benefit did not work out that way. It has been frozen at the same rate for three years and will remain frozen in cash terms until the next general election. There is no indication that there will be any change. The game is up. What the Government have or have not done must be seen for what it is. It is consistent and logical for hon. Members to say that the idea of this universal benefit loses its validity—as the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) and my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead said—if its spending power is not maintained.

We either accept the consequences of saying that family size is irrelevant to the income of the working family, and throw back decades of social and taxation policy, or we accept that family size is relevant to income and that universal child benefit is failing to do as it should and do something about it. The only thing that the House can do is to reintroduce some form of child tax allowance.

When I was looking through the Committee and Report stages of the Finance Bill of 1977, because I wanted to check what I had said, I found that our present position was forecast by a Conservative Member. I shall give the flavour of what he said to the House on 25 July 1977. He said:

"A large number of payments are index linked already that is the point. The long-term benefits are now index linked, with the approval of both sides of the House, to prices or to incomes, whichever be the greater, and the short-term benefits are linked to incomes only. One reason for arguing the case two years ago was that child benefit seemed to be on the wrong side of the boundary even then."

He was making a point about the refusal to index-link when the legislation for child benefit was considered. I freely admit that I voted with the Government not to do so. I also voted with the Government on personal taxation policy in 1975, but by 1977 I had seen through what was happening. The same Conservative Member continued:

"I am confining myself to this one point, and I am saying that if we leave the boundaries of index linking as they will be set in this Bill, the outcome will be intolerable in the case of child benefit and family support. Everyone will have his case for index-linking some further part of the taxation system and so on, but it seems to me that the family situation is the most pressing.

It will be argued—I hope that it will be—that the Government still have complete flexibility to index-link by uprating child benefit or any other form of family support through the tax system, as they wish. But every time one index-links by statute some part of the benefit system or the tax system, one imposes a rigidity on that part of the system, taking away flexibility for the Government . . . so that inevitably, if they are short of resources or of revenue, they have to move in on the others. Thus, the Government will be left with a strong inbuilt bias towards index-linking personal tax allowances, and for any Chancellor of any party in a difficult year for resources or for revenue, that, it seems to me, will be bad news in respect of child benefit and taxpayers with families, unless . . . it is the intention of the index linkers, as it should be, to go on to index-linked child benefit."—*[Official Report,* 25 July 1977; Vol. 936, c. 123-4.]

The person who made that speech is today a member of the Cabinet. He correctly forecast what would happen—except, of course, that there is no shortage of revenue—but that is not the point. The present Secretary of State for Health should be commended on his foresight in putting that warning in the pages of *Hansard* on Report on the Finance Bill 1977. He saw what was likely to happen and drew conclusions, but I cannot accept the points that were implicit in the intervention of the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden).

I understand that there is virtually 100 per cent. take-up of child benefit. I have never come across anyone who did not receive it, did not want it or sent it back. It is a massive benefit in terms of the income of working families. The hon. Member for Buckingham told us why many people do not need the extra help, but we should not greatly deprive the majority who need the extra help because child benefit has been frozen. The hon. Gentleman's case does not hold water. I shall be interested to hear his argument on the Lords amendment to the Social Security Bill.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead will press the new clause to a Division. It is important that the House should send out a signal that we are concerned that families' incomes have been eroded as a result of the interaction of the tax and social security systems. That was never the intention and it was never the stated objective of the Government, but that is what has come to pass. The sooner people get to know about it, and the sooner the House acts to redress the balance, the better.

11.45 pm

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): It is important that we should be clear about what the debate is and is not about. It is not about tackling poverty or giving help to families whose income is below the tax threshold. As I am sure the Minister will say in his reply, those families would not benefit from the new clause. The debate is about

[Sir George Young]

fairness between taxpayers with and without children. It is basically about recognition of the fact that taxpayers who are bringing up children have a responsibility which brings with it costs that are not faced by other taxpayers who do not have children. The tax system used to reflect those costs through child tax allowances.

Child tax allowances endorsed a basic principle of taxation, which is that an individual should be taxed only on his surplus income once his unavoidable expenditure has been met, hence the personal allowances which take people on low incomes right out of the tax net. When a person marries, the tax system recognises his increased obligations by giving him a married man's allowance. If the taxpayer had children, the system used to carry that principle further through the child tax allowances, which reflected the additional obligations of the taxpayer with children.

The problem began when child tax allowances were converted to child benefit, which had two objectives—the one that I have just mentioned and the new one of tackling poverty. Since that conversion, the poverty-tackling role of child benefit has been emphasised, and we have forgotten entirely the other objective of equity between taxpayers. As a result, as the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) explained, the burden of taxation has shifted progressively during the past 10 years from taxpayers without children on to the shoulders of taxpayers with children. I see no sense or equity in that.

It is true that part of the money saved by not uprating child benefit has been ploughed back to help people on low incomes, but that has meant only that the cost of tackling family poverty has been borne not by taxpayers as a whole but by taxpayers who happen to have children, and there is no sense of justice or logic in that either. The switch from child tax allowances to child benefit has been bad news for families. The problem is that child benefit is now public expenditure, and therefore bad, whereas the child tax allowances used to be tax cuts, and therefore good. The litmus paper now turns red instead of blue when the Treasury starts to look at help for families.

The new clause is a gentle reminder that children are not consumer durables to be bought by people who can afford them but not by those who cannot. They are, to use a cliché, the next generation. Bringing them up imposes costs on the parents whereas the benefits are enjoyed by society as a whole when they grow up. The burden ought to be shared, as it used to be shared, through child tax allowances. The costs of bringing up children have switched progressively during the past 10 years, I think unintentionally, away from taxpayers as a whole. The new clause is just a gentle reminder that there is a strong case in terms of horizontal equity for reverting to the system that we used to have.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): Ability to pay has always been a primary basis of our taxation system: we should not pay tax until we earn enough to feed, clothe and house ourselves, our wives and our children. That is why we had the tax allowances for children. We replaced that —I was one of those outside the House who supported the change, although I am beginning to regret having done so —with child benefit because the tax allowance suffered from two major drawbacks. One was that it was worth much more to a top rate taxpayer than it was to a standard rate taxpayer, and the other was that it was worth nothing at all to someone who earned too little to pay income tax. For those perfectly laudable reasons we replaced the tax allowance with child benefit, not realising when we did so that many of our colleagues would forget that the child benefit system that we now have replaces a tax allowance.

The arguments for child benefit are just as good today as they were when it was introduced. Unfortunately, some of my colleagues now argue, as my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. .Walden) did, that child benefit is objectionable because it goes to well-off people who do not need it. He should explore and pursue the logic of what he is saying. On that logic we would abolish the single person's allowance, the married person's allowance, mortgage interest tax relief, which is worth more to the better off, the business expansion scheme tax relief and pensions tax relief.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): What my hon. Friend has just suggested is strongly supported by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field).

Mr. Hawkins: I shall not support the new clause, although, as I am trying to explain, I greatly sympathise with the motives behind it, because so many people have forgotten that child benefit replaced a tax allowance.

If we do not abolish all the benefits that go to people who do not really need them and benefit the better off more than the worse off, why, uniquely, are we choosing to pick on people with children, those least able to afford to be picked on?

That applies to people at all income levels. A person earning £50,000 per annum with children has less ability to pay than someone earning the same amount without children. It is a fundamental principle of our tax system that the difference in the ability to pay of those with and without children should be reflected in the tax burden. That is equally true of a person earning only £8,000 a year. Those with children have less ability to pay than those without children.

That is why we should either have a tax allowance for children or retain child benefit and consistently uprate it to allow for changes in the cost of living—and it should be paid to rich and poor alike. I prefer the child benefit system and I shall support that. Therefore, much as I strongly support the motives of those who have tabled the new clause, I shall abstain.

Mr. Chris Smith: I have considerable sympathy with the argument put by the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins). I also have great sympathy with the aims of my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) in putting forward the new clause. The principal purpose that he is seeking to achieve is to highlight in graphic form the difficulties facing families in Britain in bringing up children and meeting the costs that are involved in that.

The Labour party has always supported the existence and the proper uprating of child benefit since its introduction. We believe fundamentally that that is the proper and sensible way forward in order to ensure that families have the means to bring up children in our society. That is our view and we shall continue to press the Government to change their mind on the foolish decision that they have taken for each of the past two years not to uprate child benefit.

The proposers of the new clause have identified that as a problem. They have identified the difficulties that many

families with children now face because of the Government's decision not to uprate child benefit. They have concluded that, because the Government have blocked such uprating, the way forward is no longer to batter at the doors saying that child benefit must be uprated, but to say, "Let us find another way around the problem; let us try the old idea of a tax allowance again."

I am afraid that that is the point at which my hon. Friends and I must part company. I do not think that all is lost, or that we should give up the fight for child benefit here and now. I say that for two reasons. First, there are many problems relating to a tax allowance as opposed to benefit. A tax allowance is available only to those within the tax system; it is not available to those who fall below the tax threshold. Secondly, tax allowances on the whole go to the father rather than the mother, while child benefit is paid automatically to the mother.

Sir Ian Gilmour: I think that the hon. Gentleman has slightly misunderstood the purpose of the new clause. It is not to do away with child benefit; in the present circumstances, it would provide an addition to child benefit. Surely the hon. Gentleman's arguments are entirely inapplicable.

Mr. Smith: I fear that I must disagree with the right hon. Gentleman. He is, of course, correct in saying that those who tabled the new clause seek to enshrine an additional allowance in the legislation, but the same problems will apply to that additional amount as apply to the principle of a tax allowance as opposed to an increase in child benefit.

Mr. Frank Field: I accept that between 200,000 and 300,000 parents in work would not be able to claim a tax allowance, should it be introduced, but nearly 20 million others would be able to. Is my hon. Friend saying that because 200,000 cannot claim 20 million should not?

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend mistakes my argument. I am not saying that that is a reason for rejecting the new clause out of hand; I am saying that it is a problem with the system of tax allowance that my hon. Friend wants to introduce. He himself identified a problem relating specifically to the new clause, that it would not necessarily apply to children under education age. That, of course, alters to an extent the figures that he has just given.

The other difficulty about opting for tax allowance is that tax relief is available to top-rate taxpayers at the top rate, and therefore provides more assistance for higher earners than to lower earners. My hon. Friend talked about ensuring equity both vertically and horizontally, and the horizontal argument—differentiating between families with children and those without—holds up to a certain extent. But in that context the top-rate taxpayers will pose a major disadvantage. As for the vertical argument, my hon. Friend does not have a good case. Those who fall outside the tax system will be unable to benefit from the tax relief that he proposes.

The problems involved in the mechanism of tax relief, as opposed to an increase in child benefit, are not the only reason for my opposition to my hon. Friend's proposal, however much I applaud his aims.

We shall continue to make strenuous efforts to persuade the Government that a proper uprating of child benefit is the only sensible way to improve the lot of families who are bringing up children. It is clearly the best mechanism for doing so. Many Conservative Members have made that point in the debate.

We hope that the Government will see sense and that therefore there will be no need to entertain the somewhat flawed proposals relating to child tax allowances that are provided for in the new clause. My hon. Friend's motives are entirely understandable, but I hope that he will join us in continuing to batter at the Government's door and in continuing to ask them to uprate child benefit properly, as they ought to have done in each of the last two years and as they ought to do this year and next year as well.

12 midnight

Mr. Norman Lamont: The new clause seeks to reintroduce child tax allowance alongside child benefit. The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) have a long-standing interest in the subject.

I was a little surprised by what the hon. Member for Birkenhead said. During the late 1970s he strongly supported the conversion of child tax allowances into child benefit. Recently, as he acknowledged, he has published a number of articles and made a number of speeches in which he has advocated the abolition of all tax allowances. I am not entirely sure how he reconciles that proposal with his desire to help those on low incomes. However, I realise that what he is doing tonight, as he revealed the other day in *The Guardian*, is essentially a political, or tactical or teasing exercise. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) for saying that the new clause is only a gentle reminder.

Under the new clause, the hon. Member for Birkenhead proposes to reintroduce a tax allowance which was abolished in April 1979. As I think that he acknowledged, the new clause does not make a great deal of sense. Far from simplifying and rationalising the tax and social security system, it would introduce new complications. It would be difficult to justify the cost of setting up and maintaining two separate administrative systems to give general support by different means. It has also been acknowledged during the debate that the new clause would fail to meet the aim of helping those who need it most. A child tax allowance would be of no help to the 25 per cent. of families who do not pay tax. The hon. Member for Birkenhead has suggested elsewhere that families should be able to choose whether they wish to receive a cash payment instead of a tax allowance. That, too, would make the system even more complicated.

At the practical level, the new clause does not suggest how the proposed tax allowance would be divided when both parents can claim relief. As I am sure he realises, under independent taxation both the husband and the wife could each claim the new allowance. The new clause, however, does not make it clear whether the mother or the father ought to have the relief. That is perhaps a point of detail.

Most of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, and those of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham, were directed not at the new clause but at the fact that the Government have not uprated child benefit. That decision has been explained on many occasions by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. Child benefit has not been increased this year,

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

but the Government are targeting additional help on those families who need it most. Families in receipt of income support or family credit do not gain from an increase in child benefit; it is offset in their income-related benefit.

Sir Ian Gilmour: It is not true that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security explained why child benefit was not uprated. He did not. He produced the most specious speech that I have ever heard in the House. With great respect to my right hon. Friend, he is off the point. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) said, we are dealing not with people in great poverty, but with the horizontal point—surely even the Treasury will agree with it—that people with families have more responsibilities and expenditure than people without. Will my right hon. Friend be good enough to deal with that point?

Mr. Lamont: My right hon. Friend first did my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security a grave injustice and then spoke about horizontal equity. Governments have to choose in a world of limited resources. The Government were right to decide to deploy resources more to help families in greatest need.

Mr. Chris Smith: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lamont: In a minute. I want to answer my right hon. Friend.

This year we have added £205 million to expenditure on income-related benefits, £70 million of which offsets the effect of the child benefit decision, with a further £70 million increase in the real value of those benefits.

We recognise the issue of horizontal equity and that child benefit is a useful contribution towards the upkeep of children, but it does not follow that it should be uprated each year and indexed all the time. Tax allowances in 1981 were not indexed. Sometimes tax allowances have been increased by more than inflation, sometimes in line with inflation and sometimes not even with inflation.

Obviously, benefit decisions must be taken in the light of overall public expenditure. With benefits, unlike with tax allowances, we have the opportunity to redeploy some resources to help the poorest families. Although horizontal equity is important and people have obligations towards their children, it was absolutely right to direct some resources towards helping the poorest families. Increases in child benefit would not have been as effective, or indeed helped poorest families as much, as the increases in family credit.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Financial Secretary is right only in so far as he says that the Government must choose where to place their fiscal and financial priorities. The Government have made those choices clear. In last year's Budget they decided to forgo well over £2 billion worth of income in tax cuts for top rate taxpayers. For a fraction of that money they could have increased child benefit in line with inflation both last year and this year. The Financial Secretary, as a Treasury Minister, must have had some hand in discussing those choices with the Secretary of State for Social Security. How does he justify them?

Mr. Lamont: The other point is that the Government's tax policies and overall economic policies have resulted in a considerable increase in the living standards of earners with and without children. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I am answering the point, but I want to refer to what the hon. Member for Birkenhead said, which was reflected in what my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham said. Both asserted that changes to the tax-benefit system have favoured those without children.

It is, of course, perfectly true that reductions in the basic rate of income tax have benefited single people more than married couples with children. The reason is that single people pay a higher proportion of their income in tax to start with. However, the tax cuts have benefited everyone, including families with children, and since the Government came to office real take-home pay has increased substantially for those with and without children at all income levels. That is true at half average earnings, where real take-home pay for a married man with two children is up by over 24 per cent.

Although it may be true that take-home pay after tax cuts has increased somewhat more for those without children, when one takes account of what has been achieved by the increases in family credit, it is not true at the bottom end of the scale. I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend for Chesham and Amersham and of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) to the recent study by the Institute of Fiscal Studies into the impact of taxes and benefits since 1979. It said:

> "On incomes below about £200 a week, those with children do significantly better than those without as a direct result of the much increased generosity of family credit."

I put it to the House that the problem of people with children at the lower end of the scale has been taken care of through our redeploying resources to family credit.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham is over-interested in what he calls horizontal equity. The people whom he says have lost out have benefited enormously from the general prosperity, the general growth in the economy and the tax cuts, all of which have brought about a considerable increase in the living standards of families with children. If we had not pursued our policies, many of those families would have been much nearer the poverty level and many of them have been floated further away from poverty as a result of the policies we have pursued.

Sir Ian Gilmour: I welcome, of course, the fact that something has been done for the least well off and it is gratifying that £70 million of the £200 million saved on child benefit went to the least well off. It would have been even more gratifying if the whole £200 million had gone to the least well off, but it did not. I must ask my right hon. Friend to return to the question of horizontal equity. It is true that everyone is better off, unless something has gone seriously wrong with the economy. All our children grow every year. However, families with children are relatively less well off than families without children or even than single persons. Will my right hon. Friend be kind and deal with that point?

Mr. Lamont: I have attempted to deal with it. I have made the point that I attach far more importance to the relief of poverty at the bottom end of the scale than I do to the principle of horizontal equity. I still make the point that child benefit has been a useful contribution to the upkeep of children. My right hon. Friend is saying that people miles above the poverty line—middle income families—have somehow been made far worse off just as a

result of the decision made in the past few years on child benefit. That is not a serious factor or a serious matter in household economics. It is not a serious factor compared with the general increase in prosperity that those families have enjoyed in recent years.

I am less concerned about horizontal equity and more concerned about doing something for people at the bottom end of the scale than my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham appears to be. It is curious to propose new clause 23, which would be so regressive in its impact. What would be the impact of a £100 tax allowance? It would mean £40 a year to the higher rate taxpayer, £25 a year to the basic rate taxpayer, £7·50 a year to a taxpayer on family credit and nothing for anyone earning less than the existing allowances. That seems a difficult approach to justify. We have got our priorities right by directing the help towards those in the greatest need.

Mr. Rooker: The Financial Secretary said that child benefit was useful. He has also recited the years in which tax allowances had risen by more than inflation, level with inflation and by less than inflation. If my memory serves me correctly—I ask the Financial Secretary to confirm this—in only one year since 1977 have tax allowances risen by less than the rate of inflation. That was 1981, the year when allowances did not rise at all and when the Government came to the House for agreement to freeze tax allowances. Yet child benefit has been frozen at least twice and it has twice been raised by less than the rate of inflation. Only once in 12 years have tax allowances not risen in line with inflation, yet child benefit has failed to increase with inflation in four of those 12 years. Where is the equity for the family in that?

12.15 am

Mr. Lamont: I in no way sought to mislead the House or the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). I said that allowances were not increased in 1981; it was the only year in which allowances were not indexed. The Government have that choice, and they exercised it on that one occasion. As the hon. Member for Perry Barr said, child benefit has not been indexed on more occasions. But in those years we have directed more help through family credit, as I have repeatedly emphasised. I believe that the redeployment of resources to the direct relief of poverty is more valuable than, and should come before, the principle of horizontal equity on which my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham has based his case. My right hon. Friend attaches enormous importance to that principle.

I believe that there should be a recognition of children in the system, but I do not believe that my right hon. Friend is right in saying that those whose incomes take them well above the family credit network—those on average earnings and above—have really had a significant degree of hardship inflicted on them by our decision. They have benefited from increased earnings and the tax cuts of recent years. For that reason, I believe that the priorities on which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has decided are emphatically the right priorities.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 23, Noes 194.

Division No. 294] **[12.18 am**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beith, A. J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Clay, Bob
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
McAvoy, Thomas
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Parry, Robert
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon David
Wallace, James
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir George Young and
Mr. Jeff Rooker.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil

MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly negatived.

Further consideration adjourned.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Bill, not amended in the Committee, (and as amended in the Standing Committee), to be further considered this day.

Rate Support Grant (Scotland)

12.28 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move,

That the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1989, dated 24th May 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 25th May, be approved.

I appear before the House for the first time with my new responsibility for local government finance in Scotland. It is an opportunity to present good news. The purpose of this order is to adjust grant entitlements for Scottish local authorities for previous years, in the light of more up-to-date information on expenditure during those years. The main point of note is that, in the year just ended, 1988-89, authorities reduced their expenditure, as against their original budget figures, by £48 million, as a result of which, if the House approves this order, we will return to them about £70 million in rate support grant. There are also minor adjustments of grant for 1987-88 and for 1986-87. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has of course been fully consulted about the contents of the order, and welcomes it.

Authorities' budgets for 1988-89 were £3,742 million —£136·5 million above guidelines. As a result, the House approved a year ago the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1988, under which the grant apportionments were reduced of those authorities budgeting above guideline. Of the total excess over guideline of £136·5 million, £116 million, or 85 per cent., was accounted for by Strathclyde and Lothian regions alone. The tariff of grant penalties imposed last July was, when compared with the huge budgeted overspending and also when compared with tariffs in some earlier years, moderate. It imposed modest penalties on authorities which were budgeting slightly over guideline, and which might most easily be persuaded to reduce their spending during the year. The penalty tariff increased substantially for authorities budgeting at 4 per cent. or more over guideline, because it was on those authorities that the greatest pressure needed to be exercised.

The judiciousness of this penalty tariff is well demonstrated by local authorities' response, as evidenced in their provisional outturn figures for this year. Overall spending has been reduced by £48 million by comparison with the original budget figures, and, among authorities that have reduced their expenditure most significantly, Strathclyde has secured reductions of £17 million and Lothian of £20 million. Those two authorities are therefore the major beneficiaries of this evening's order, under which, and subject to the House's approval, they will have returned to them £48·1 million and £23·8 million respectively. Other notable beneficiaries of tonight's order are Fife region and Edinburgh and Glasgow districts. Some authorities—notably Central region and Stirling and Cunninghame districts—have regrettably increased their spending at outturn, and so their penalties are increased.

By comparison, the grant adjustments in respect of 1987-88 and 1986-87 are minor indeed, and reflect simply minor adjustments to those authorities' accounts in the light of the most up-to-date information on their spending in the relevant financial years.

I should now like to turn briefly to details of the order. It makes adjustments to grant penalties for the last three years of rate support grant, using the penalty tariffs previously applied to each of those years.

First, the order increases rate support grant for 1988-89 to take account of reductions in spending at provisional outturn stage. As a result, rate support grant will increase from £1,897·8 million to £1,967·5 million. Strathclyde region has reduced its spending excess over guideline from 5·1 per cent. at the time of the 1988 order to 3·97 per cent. and will recover £48·1 million in grant. Similarly, Lothian has reduced its excess from 9·71 per cent. to 4·85 per cent. It will recover grant of £23·8 million. Details of the original 1988-89 penalties and of how they are now being revised are given in appendix 2 of the report, the revised penalties being shown in column 6 of the table to appendix 2 to the report with adjustments to grant payments set out in column 9.

For 1987-88, final or near final outturns show a small decrease in spending. The effect of this is to reduce penalties by £0·2 million. Details of the adjustments to penalties are shown in column 6 of table II of appendix 3 to the report.

For 1986-87, final or near final outturns show a small increase in spending, which has the effect of increasing grant penalties by £0·03 million. Details of the adjustments to penalties are shown in column 8 of table II of appendix 4 to the report. There will be a continuing need to adjust grant for each of those years in the light of up-to-date information.

As for next year—1990-91—representatives of COSLA met my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last Monday, 3 July, and discussed the prospects for spending next year. They said that they expected their spending to go up by at least 7 per cent.—although this was on the basis of simply accepting this year's budget levels and adding their estimate of inflation. I would hope they can do better than that by looking at scope for economies and for greater efficiency and value for money. COSLA recognised that there might be something in this and it is encouraging—though in all the circumstances no more than mildly encouraging—that COSLA now proposes to open discussions with the accounts commission about the commission's future programme of value-for-money studies. I very much hope that that dialogue will be productive.

In the meantime, my right hon. and learned Friend will be reflecting on the discussions with COSLA last Monday and will take them into account when reaching conclusions on a revenue support grant settlement for 1990-91. It is hoped to make a statement on this before the House rises.

It is tempting to say more and to range wider on the subject of local government spending in Scotland, but I shall resist that temptation until I have had the chance to meet representatives of local authorities. For our immediate purposes, the order is good news for local authorities, it has been strongly welcomed by COSLA, and I commend it to the House.

12.36 am

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I welcome the Minister to his new role as poll tax spokesman, although I must tell him that Edinburgh Members of Parliament with small majorities do not do too well as poll tax spokesmen. The last one lost his seat, and the Minister may have the same problem at the next election. His new responsibilities are due to a shift in the power structure of the Scottish Tory party. I am delighted to see the new deputy leader of the Tory party in Scotland in his place, even though the new leader is not in his.

We welcome any money that the Government give local authorities, although the Minister's argument that this is some act of generosity on his part is laughable. This is money that local authorities should have had in the first place. It should never have been lost under a penalty scheme that should never have existed.

We welcome the end of the grant penalties. The system ended in Scotland only on 31 March this year, when it also ended in England and Wales. So poll tax levels in Scotland have been affected by the clawback, but England and Wales will enjoy a whole year without penalties, which means that the poll tax there next year will not be affected as it was in Scotland.

This order does not return all the money due to the local authorities. It represents only the partial return of clawback money, and a small number of authorities have lost out.

We welcome this money, however meagre it is and however late in the coming. Our local authorities need it to spend on the services that they provide.

This rather late and short debate may be an historic moment for the House. This may be the last rate support grant order for Scotland. When we return to power and introduce a new local taxation system, we shall not call it the rate support grant system.

12.39 am

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I welcome the order, which will greatly help local authorities. Will my hon. Friend answer two questions, or write to me with the information if that proves inconvenient?

Why have only four out of all the authorities received penalties? Why has not Annandale and Eskdale been penalised? It has clearly been overspending, and it would be interesting to know why, and by how much. Has my hon. Friend the Minister brought it home to that authority that that is no way to proceed with prudent housekeeping? *[Interruption.]* It has been the result of a Democrat majority in Annandale and Eskdale.

Secondly, will my hon. Friend either respond tonight or write to me about the arrangements for the UBR, which are so important in Scotland and which my hon. Friend the Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang) mentioned recently? They appear to be more satisfactory than any self-employed person or small business man could have anticipated, which is good news.

12.41 am

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Annandale and Eskdale district's overspend against guidelines in 1987-88 increased on the basis of further adjustments to the accounts for that year. Those figures will have been produced by the council's auditors. It is a great pity that the authority, which is normally noted for its prudence, should find itself in that position.

Local authorities knew when budgeting last year that there would be penalties. They were also given early warning of the exact penalty tariff on 19 May 1988 and a similar procedure was adopted for earlier years. Therefore, they had plenty of opportunity during the year to reduce

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

their planned expenditure and thereby to avoid penalties. However, I hasten to confirm that, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) said, the penalty system is coming to an end. The hon. Gentleman referred to the closing down of the English system this year. That was undertaken for reasons that did not apply in Scotland. There are many differences between the Scottish and English systems. After the close down, English authorities were unable to recover grant already lost last year or in previous years. Our arrangements in Scotland are well understood and local authorities were well able to respond.

The essence of the order is to return £70 million to local authorities. The funds are being returned to local authorities that budgeted to overspend last year, but were then able during the year to reduce their spending. The order will assist local authorities' cash flows now and assist them in keeping budgets. Secondly, it will keep down the base level of their spending for all future years.

The order has been welcomed by COSLA and I detect, despite the slightly grudging remarks of the hon. Member for Cathcart, that, none the less, on the whole the Opposition welcome the order, although it is difficult for him to say so. We have now embarked on a new grant system, and grant penalties are something of the past, except to the extent that we are repaying them in part. It is the accountability of the community charge that allows us to end grant penalties, and for that reason alone the Opposition should join us in welcoming the new community charge. I commend the order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1989, dated 24th May 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 25 May, be approved.

Coal Industry

12.43 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): I beg to move,

That the draft Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payment Schemes) (Amendment) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 15th June, be approved.

I have such good news to tell my hon. Friends that I must spell it out for a few moments.

I am sure that the order will be welcomed by both sides of the House, as it follows and confirms my announcement on 10 April that the Government would modify the redundant mineworkers' payments scheme so that receipt of benefits under the scheme would no longer be conditional upon the beneficiary making himself available for work.

As hon. Members will know, it has always been part of the scheme that beneficiaries must attend unemployment benefit offices, be available for work, and therefore be in receipt of national insurance credits, in order to receive benefits under the scheme. Over the past year or so, however, the restart programme has been testing more rigorously whether claimants are genuinely available for work. A number of RMPS beneficiaries have been failing adequately to show their availability. That has meant that they have lost entitlement to RMPS benefits.

Payment of RMPS benefits has always been conditional upon the ex-mineworker signing on for employment at the unemployment benefit office unless he was certified as incapable of work through sickess or injury. Nevertheless, there was a general perception that those who took up offers of weekly benefits associated with voluntary redundancy under the successive schemes were in effect taking early retirement from the coal industry.

Consequently, concern was expressed by hon. Members in all parts of the House, and especially by my hon. Friends the Members for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles), for Newark (Mr. Alexander), and for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin).

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister agrees that representations were made by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House representing mining constituencies—but nowadays the majority of them are Conservative Members.

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend makes his point very well. Certainly concern was expressed by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House that ex-miners who regarded themselves as retired after many years' service in the coal industry were being required to demonstrate their availability for work.

The effect of the draft order is to create a new option for RMPS beneficiaries. They may choose to continue, as at present, to sign on at unemployment benefit offices, to make themselves available for work, and to receive national insurance credits. Alternatively, beneficiaries may choose not to sign on, and consequently not to be asked about their availability for work.

In that case they will still receive RMPS benefits as before. They will also receive further benefits under the

scheme equivalent to contributory social security benefits to which they will no longer be entitled because national insurance credits will no longer be awarded to them. Those further benefits are equivalent to sickness benefit and invalidity benefit. Beneficiaries will also be eligible to receive sums sufficient to pay class 3 national insurance contributions to maintain entitlement to state retirement pension.

The key element of the amending order is the new article 9, paragraphs (1) to (3), which have two main effects as regards payments to RMPS beneficiaries entitled to weekly payments under the scheme.

A beneficiary who is not incapacitated will be paid a weekly sum which, together with any social security benefits to which he is entitled, will equal the total benefits to which he would have been entitled had he continued to sign on at the unemployment benefit office. That means that the beneficiary will receive a payment under the scheme equal in value to unemployment benefit when his entitlement to unemployment benefit is exhausted—and irrespective of whether he makes himself available for work.

On days of sickness, when the RMPS beneficiary is no longer eligible for sickness or invalidity benefits from the social security system, the scheme will pay a weekly sum which, taken together with any social security benefits to which he is entitled, will equal the total of all the benefits to which he would have been entitled had he been eligible for contributory social security benefits. That means that the beneficiary will receive a payment under the scheme equal in value before tax to either sickness benefit or invalidity benefit. All RMPS benefits are liable to tax in the case of those beneficiaries falling in the tax bracket.

The new article 18 provides for the Secretary of State to pay such number of an employee's voluntary class 3 national insurance contributions as will be sufficient to secure his entitlement to state retirement pension at the rate to which he would have been entitled had he continued to receive national insurance credits. In general, we expect payments of such contributions to be made as a single lump sum at age 59, taking into account the individual's past employment record and his being in receipt of automatic national insurance credits between the ages of 60 and 65.

Article 18A fulfils the other promise I made in my announcement of 10 April—that beneficiaries will be recompensed for lost RMPS benefits arising from changes in the availability-for-work procedures. That generous provision provides for full retrospective award of lost benefits arising from the effect of restart to 3 January 1988. That will fully compensate those who have been adversely affected.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I am sure that the House welcomes the Minister's announcement that the position of redundant mineworkers will be restored to that for which they understood they had bargained when accepting redundancy. The news that losses will be repaid is also most welcome. However, perhaps the Minister will address himself to the position of mineworkers who were harassed into accepting low-pay employment under the restart programme and who, because they accepted such employment, may have lost their entitlement to benefit from other aspects of the scheme. Can anything be done to assist such people?

Mr. Spicer: We do not accept that there has been any harassment—that is the wrong word to use. There is no way in which one could recompense somebody who has taken on another job. If people have not been able to take on a job, they will get compensation.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): All the mineworkers in my constituency are grateful to the Minister and the Departments for bringing about this satisfactory conclusion. The Minister will recall that a few months ago I presented to him two cases of 59-year-old men, one of whom was called Harry Cryer. As recently as last week, Harry Cryer received a letter from the Department of Employment demanding repayments and telling him that he would not get his benefit or credits. I hope that, after tonight, such action by the Department of Employment will cease.

Mr. Spicer: No harassment is involved. It is our intention that all repayments should be made by the end of August. I hope that that deals with the hon. Gentleman's two constituency cases.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): At the weekend, I had a telephone call from a member of the clerical staffs association who had a certain amount of superannuation. She asked me whether I would ask the Minister whether women working in offices who had been made redundant would be treated in the same way, notwithstanding the fact that they had some superannuation from their pension fund, and whether any difference would be made up.

Mr. Spicer: I shall check that matter and get in touch with the hon. Gentleman. I am not sure whether that case falls into this category.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I thank the Departments of Employment and Trade and Industry for doing this great thing. Will the hon. Gentleman cast his mind back to a question that I put to him some time ago about people who have lost their national insurance credits? They are likely to lose their pension benefit when they are 65. Will there be back credits? Can we ensure that the pension is not lost or reduced?

Mr. Spicer: I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that the credits will be made up in the form of a lump sum at the age of 59 if there are credit deficiencies.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Can my hon. Friend explain the morality of the order? Can he explain why the mineworkers should be separate from trawlermen and other people who have lousy jobs? Has he considered why miners, as opposed to people in other employment, should be singled out in what one could call the lousy job factor?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I am sure that the Minister will not go down that road but will deal with the order.

Mr. Spicer: It is perfectly fair that my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) should ask for justification. There was, however, a perception when the arrangements were made—the arguments for them are perhaps not matters that are properly debatable tonight, as you have said, Madam Deputy Speaker—that people would not lose out and that the availability-for-work criteria would not be applied

[Mr. Spicer]

with the rigour that is being applied under restart. One can argue about whether that perception was well founded. British Coal made it clear at the time that people had to be available for work, and the Government accepted the case for these arrangements.

It was perfectly proper for my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West to make the point that miners who have been made redundant have been given exceptionally generous terms, for which the taxpayer is paying. There is no question about that. We hope that there will be benefits for the industry. Productivity is rising, and the industry is becoming able to stand on its own feet against competition.

I am sure that hon. Members recognise that the RMPS is one of the most generous redundancy schemes that has ever been set up for a group of industrial employees—that makes the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West. On joining the scheme, beneficiaries could receive weekly benefits of up to 90 per cent. of their pre-redundancy earnings and a lump sum payment. By this order, the Government have demonstrated their continuing concern for ex-mineworkers by allowing them, if they wish, no longer to make themselves available for work, and by paying them benefits equivalent to those they would have received from the social security system.

This is a further example of the Government's commitment to the coal mining industry. The Government require that the industry maintains its present pace of putting its house in order so that it can stand on its own feet and compete fairly against all comers. That is in its own hands and in prospect, contrary to what some Opposition Members sometimes say.

12.56 am

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I am tempted to take the Minister up on his assertion of the Conservative Government's commitment to the coal industry. We will wait for the outcome of the negotiations between British Coal and the new generators before we decide what type of commitment the Government have to the coal industry. Everyone knows that the Government have control over all of the organisations that are involved in those negotiations.

At long last, an injustice in the British coalfields is being put right tonight. It is a great pity that we have had to wait some 19 months since the introduction of the Government's restart scheme for mineworkers who have retired on weekly redundancy payments to get what we could only call fair treatment. Much has been said about who is responsible for getting the Government to take this corrective action aimed at the anomalies that restart threw up, but the public record will show quite clearly that it was Labour Members who first raised the issue—in July 1988—of the treatment of retired mineworkers.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Can the hon. Gentleman tell us why the Labour party opposed any amendments to the restart scheme when it was considered by the House?

Mr. Barron: The public record will show where the argument about the treatment of retired mineworkers under the Government's restart scheme came from. It came from my predecessor on the Opposition Front Bench—my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie)—and from me on the Back Benches. Conservative Members can read the list of hon. Members who are supposed to have got the amending order before the House tonight, but although many of them took part in the debate in July 1988, not one of them mentioned the problem that retired miners would have with the Government's restart scheme.

When the matter was first raised, the Minister said that the

"matter comes under employment legislation and is not for my Department."—[*Official Report*, 14 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 674.]

Tonight we find that he was wrong. It is, indeed, a matter for his Department. That is why he is at the Dispatch Box presenting this order to put the injustice right.

No immediate action was taken after that debate. Letters and discussions were followed by delegations to the Department of Energy and the Department of Employment led by me and many of my hon. Friends. By March 1989 the Department of Energy was still unable to settle the issues that we are debating. Yet at that time an order dealing with restructuring grants in the coal industry was brought before the House. One would have thought that after 14 months of restart and months after the issue had first been raised, this order could have been brought forward then in order to end the injustice done to many people who took redundancy under the scheme.

It was only on 14 March this year, in a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), that the Secretary of State said that he would introduce an amending order, and that is what we are debating.

The Opposition thank the Government for the order. The Minister may be aware that about 60,000 recipients will be covered by it. Many of them are under 60 years of age and are therefore eligible for restart interviews or could meet the availability-for-work test under that scheme.

In effect, the original orders make such people retire. Many British Coal officials who offered redundancy terms said that the men would retire when they finished at their colliery, only to find out that that was not true. I am pleased to say that when this amending order is passed tonight they will be officially retired.

The Minister may be interested to know that the major trade union in the British coal industry, of which I am proud to have been a member for many years now and of which I am a sponsored Member in the House, currently allows men to retire at 55 years of age. We should be congratulating the Government on beating that target by up to five years.

The order deserves the support of the House because it puts right an injustice. It ensures that an amount equivalent to unemployment benefit due or class 3 national insurance contributions are paid by the Department of Energy and so removes the anomaly that existed between that Department and the Department of Employment. It will compensate those who have lost many hundreds, if not thousands, of pounds as a result of the way in which the restart interviews were applied to people in receipt of a weekly payment and a coal allowance from British Coal.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): As the hon. Gentleman knows, Sherwood is the largest mining constituency and so has more miners who have retired under the RMPS than

any other in Britain. Why is it that not one miner in my constituency has lost a pound of his entitlement? Why does that happen only in Labour constituencies?

Mr. Barron: The hon. Gentleman may have answered another question. If nobody in his constituency lost any money under the restart scheme, that may be why it was not until February this year that the hon. Gentleman appears in any records of the House as wanting to do anything about the problems of retired miners under the restart scheme.

When I raised the differences between constituencies in July 1988, nearly 12 months ago, the Department of Employment was not operating the restart interviews in the way that it did later in my constituency. The scheme was introduced gradually throughout Britain, and its effect was felt first in areas such as Leicestershire and south Wales.

Mr. Skinner: I think that there is a more sinister interpretation of what the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) has had to say. I am of the opinion that some of the bureaucrats in the DSS and unemployment benefit offices have been instructed to go for the Labour constituencies. The hon. Gentleman let the cat out of the bag.

Mr. Barron: Perhaps the Minister would like to answer that point when he replies. I would not care to make such a suggestion; it seems to me to credit the Conservative party with far too much forethought and political wisdom, although I may be wrong.

Opposition Members welcome the order, although we wish that it had come sooner: we have been at the forefront of the argument that this injustice should be put right. We hope that, if anomalies recur in Government legislation that seem to be aimed at frightening people away from becoming unemployment statistics—and, on occasion, aimed at massaging the statistics—people who have spent a lifetime working in coal mines expecting retirement rather than redundancy will not be treated so callously.

1.6 am

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): As it is late, I shall be brief.

I have three thank-you's to offer my hon. Friend the Minister. As hon. Members will remember, I mentioned in my maiden speech that I represented thousands of coal miners, as I did at the time. Now the pits have closed, or are about to, and relatively few miners are left. The fact that that transition has taken place with relatively little pain or disruption to the constituency is due entirely to the redundant mineworkers payment scheme. */Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Let us have one debate at a time.

Mrs. Currie: My first thank-you is to my hon. Friend the Minister and his predecessors for implementing the scheme and making it as generous as it has been during the 1980s. My second is for the changes contained in the order. I am sure that my hon. Friend realises that miners were indeed encouraged to see themselves as retired rather than redundant, whatever may have been written in the paperwork at the time. They felt that they had completed their service down the pits with honour and dignity, and that the reduction in numbers had been made in the national interest. */Interruption.]* We have a saying in my part of the world, and the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is proving the truth of it: "Derbyshire born and Derbyshire bred—strong in the arm and thick in the head". I have been waiting for six years for the opportunity to say that to the hon. Gentleman.

When interviewed by restart and told that their benefits were to be withdrawn, my constituents were very upset. They came to see me in my advice bureaux, just as others went to many of my colleagues. They explained why they felt so upset. This may answer the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby), who is my neighbour. They felt that they had already done their bit by giving up their jobs and what they saw as their status in life—because that goes with the job—and also by giving up the prospect of a future career in the industry. They believed that they had become retired people, so it was difficult for them when they were told that they were not retired and that they would have to return to the job market on a compulsory and not a voluntary basis.

The most effective pressure of all came from the Union of Democratic Mineworkers. That is true of many of my constituents. I put it to the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) that when men have stayed at work despite the most horrendous provocation, as my constituents did thoughout the 12 months' strike, they deserve extra recognition and consideration, and they got it from the Minister.

Mr. Barron: Can the hon. Lady tell us when the UDM sat down with the Government to discuss redundant miners and the restart scheme? Did the union do that when closure of the south Derbyshire coalfield was being discussed?

Mrs. Currie: If it is in order, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall refer in a few moments to some of the closures. It is typical of the Labour party, both in my constituency and elsewhere, that all it can do is to pick and poke at what happened in the past. Most of my hon. Friends, and my constituents, are much more interested in the future.

Thirdly, I thank my Government colleagues for bringing the scheme to an end. The last entrants were in March 1987. That was entirely right and proper. The reconstruction of the coal industry has almost drawn to a close. Coal is now extracted by fewer than half the previous number of miners. Future miners who are made redundant who go on to schemes of this kind will have to bargain for their money with the employer. That is absolutely right. It is far better that the employer should get costs down so that he can chase big customers and serve them properly.

I look forward to the day when British Coal (Enterprises) starts to be a taxpayer and to contribute instead of taking taxpayers' money. I am convinced that that can happen. We should work towards the eventual disappearance of schemes such as this. We should not be subsidising the industry with money provided by private businesses, often in the same constituency, which may find it hard to compete.

As a result of the redundant mineworkers payment scheme, huge changes have taken place in the industry and also in my constituency. This is the first time in nearly four years that I have been able to speak about the reconstruction of industry in my constituency. My constituents have no regrets whatever about leaving the

[Mrs. Currie]

coal industry. They were given a choice. They could choose either to leave the industry under the RMPS—which meant that they had some security and some financial certainty for the rest of their lives—or to stay in the industry.

On 24 June I visited the mine workshops in Swadlincote—the main workshops centre in the midlands. They are flourishing and looking forward to the day when they will be privatised and can serve customers way beyond British Coal, and I look forward to the day when I can have shares in the business.

Most of the men took the opportunity that was offered by the scheme to say goodbye to the industry, and they did so without a backward glance. All Conservative Members with mining constituencies worried very much about the effect on employment, but we need not have done so. Those miners turned their backs on a dirty and dangerous industry, which still takes a terrible toll on men's health—we know that from our advice bureaux when people ask us if we can help them to get compensation for appalling lung diseases which are the legacy of deep coal mining—and our fears were unfounded.

Unemployment in my constituency started to come down before the pits closed, and it has been coming down steadily ever since. As a result, we are now in a totally different ball game. We need the skills of the men who have left the industry and many of them are returning to the job market. That is most welcome. The only other change that I hope to see, and which I hope that the Minister will encourage, is British Coal getting rid of and selling the many derelict acres of land that it owns in my constituency and elsewhere so that we can get on with further reconstruction. If the transition is successful and we reach the point where we say that British Coal should get rid of the land and make it available to other industries which will offer employment to the sons and daughters of my ex-miners, it will be mainly because of the Government's generosity in this scheme and others. I should like to express my gratitude to my hon. Friend for that.

1.14 am

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): I do not give such a qualified welcome to the order as the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). I extend to the Minister my full appreciation for the order.

I do not give a damn whether the miners concerned are members of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers or of the National Union of Mineworkers. They all suffered from the restart legislation. I do not want to become involved in a brawl about who did this and who did that. The order rectifies the position of 60,000 miners. I could probably claim to be the first person to raise the problem, but that is not important. It is unseemly that we have one voice from the Conservative Benches that challenges the merits of the order. That is a pity. I expected the order to receive a unanimous welcome from the House.

I was perturbed to be told that there were no problems in the Sherwood constituency when thousands of miners throughout the country had problems. It makes me suspicious that miners suffered not only harassment but political harassment because of the restart programme.

The history of the matter must be put on the record. The Minister knows that the miners' group had a meeting with the Secretary of State for Energy. On behalf of the miners' group I want to be fair to the Secretary of State. At that meeting the right hon. Gentleman told us that he warned the Department of Employment of the consequences of forcing the order through, but that it insisted on it. I do not intend to make party political points or to indict the Under-Secretary of State for the legislative mess that was created.

The miners' parliamentary group met the Minister of State, Department of Employment who extended to us the greatest courtesy and understanding. He told us that we were the only people who had submitted documentary evidence to show the mistake that was made. He was anxious to rectify the problem and kindly assured us that he would do his level best to ensure that there was amending legislation.

The miners' group was persistent and met the chairman of British Coal. He assured us that the problem was not of his making and that, although he had tried to advise the Government of the anomalies, unfortunately Governments do not always listen. Ex-miners and redundant miners who are involved will welcome this retrospective legislation. Not only do I think that they will welcome the retrospection, but I believe that they will welcome it even more because the Minister has said that there will be retrospection until January 1988. That is important for many of the redundant mineworkers involved.

We have all seen such mineworkers at our surgeries. I had one lad coming to me with his wife and he was actually crying about how they were going to make ends meet. My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) could probably tell the House about more threatening circumstances as a consequence of redundancy. The House should be under no illusion. This legislative mistake caused much distress among redundant miners, many of them in their early 50s or late 50s, who had given a lifetime of service to the industry. After having given that lifetime of service, some were practically unemployable.

I warmly welcome the order. It will give succour to 60,000 mineworkers. I do not give a damn about what union or what area they are in and I do not give a damn who takes the credit for it. Those miners are the people who will benefit and we welcome the order.

1.20 am

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): It was, I believe, the late President Kennedy who once said that success had a thousand fathers, but failure was an orphan. As the announcement tonight is an undoubted success for the Government in responding to what is widely perceived to have been a serious injustice in the redundancy scheme, there are, inevitably, many hon. Members who are perhaps introducing a jarring note into what should be a response of wide acceptance of the scheme by Conservative and Opposition Members.

Undoubtedly it was correct, as my hon. Friend the Minister said in early debates on the subject, that technically the details of the scheme meant that those who participated in it would be subject to programmes such as the restart scheme. The reality, as was made clear by representations from many hon. Members, which they heard from many of their constituents, was that when the scheme was sold on the ground in individual pits, it was made clear to the people concerned that they would be

taking early retirement as part of a restructuring scheme. I see no immorality or inconsistency in that and I believe that the Government have acted properly and responsibly in treating what is widely perceived to have been a great injustice.

Much of the debate tonight has been about who was responsible for the process and how they were responsible. There may be those hon. Members who belong to the rottweiler tendency who believe that barking and biting is the only way to achieve anything. Equally, it is clear that there are many other hon. Members who believe that more patient and careful argument is more likely to succeed. It is immaterial who was jumping up and down in the House. What really mattered was that as the problem and its seriousness became manifest in constituency after constituency, all hon. Members who represented mining constituencies joined in representations to the Government, which have been so successfully vindicated.

One must recognise the complexity involved in coming up with such a scheme and its interaction with so many other parts of the legislative framework. It is good to see that both the Department of Employment and the Department of Energy are represented here tonight by Ministers. That reflects the complexity and considerable interaction the scheme has with legislation on a wide basis.

Clearly, this part of the restructuring has been concluded very satisfactorily and brings to a substantial conclusion the major restructuring of the coal industry which, it must be emphasised, has taken place without a single compulsory redundancy. It is only right to record clearly the thanks of the House and all hon. Members who represent mining constituencies that not only has that restructuring been achieved, but that it has been achieved with manifest justice. I speak on behalf of all Conservative Members in saying that this restructuring should lead to even greater success when the mining industry is returned to the private sector and miners can own a stake in the pits in which they work.

1.24 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I represent a mining constituency—the only one in Northumberland with a working pit left. I warmly welcome the scheme and I decline the invitation of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to join in a competition to see who contributed most to the achievement of this most welcome outcome. I congratulate the Government and express the thanks of the redundant miners in my constituency.

The order restores the position to what the miners thought it was in the first place. Let there be no doubt that miners believed at the time, and were led to believe, that they were taking early retirement. They were told, "You have worked for many years in the industry, but the industry now has to change. We should like you to retire early." In many cases, the miners' health was not all that good, and their chances of alternative jobs were almost non-existent, so they were told, "We will ensure that you have a satisfactory basis on which to retire early."

Much of the literature that the men received at the time referred to pensions, because early pensions were part of the package. If one talks to people about pensions, they tend to assume that they have retired. They tend to think that they have entered early retirement rather than a temporary interval after which they will be asked to go for interviews for another job. It came as a shock and a blow to a great many miners to be presented with the awful choice between losing their benefits through not taking part in the restart scheme and entering the restart scheme and taking a badly paid job that probably would not last very long and permanently losing their right to all their benefits. Either way, they would lose, and that was a frightening prospect.

Mr. Skinner: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beith: I think that the hon. Gentleman may wish to widen the terms of the debate——

Mr. Skinner: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beith: Well, I have not——

Mr. Skinner: Go on. Give way.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) giving way?

Mr. Beith: I give way to the hon. Member for Bolsover.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman referred to the restart scheme. In view of the contest in which he was engaged some time ago, does the hon. Gentleman think that Paddy Backdown would benefit from a restart scheme?

Mr. Beith: My right hon. Friend has plenty of excellent and useful work to do, as have I—both of us in the positions that we each now occupy.

As the Minister must realise, the miners who had to face that terrible choice have been through a miserable year, in which they have not known—*[Interruption.]* Some hon. Members seem to think that the position of the redundant mineworkers who have been through what I am describing is amusing in some way; I must tell them that it is not. To be faced with the prospect of not being able to keep up the payments on their house or maintain their families in ordinary circumstances as in previous years was not at all amusing, and it is a great relief that that cloud has been lifted from them.

If the Minister is in the business of righting injustices in redundancy payments schemes in the industry, there are a few other things that he could do on the basis of his experience. I am sure that he would like to repeat the experience of gaining all-party support for his proposals. He could examine the position of opencast workers as we approach 1992 and the single European market. Opencast workers are still not treated in the same way as those covered by the scheme. The Minister could usefully consider that problem, because European money would be available to sort it out. He might also consider the position of the widows who did not get full housing benefit because the cash that they were receiving in lieu of concessionary coal disqualified them

The Minister has started on the useful course of righting injustices in redundancy payments and concessionary coal schemes. I hope that he will continue on that course, and will not be discouraged by those of his hon. Friends who say that the Government have no place in such activities and that we ought not to have such schemes. The Minister recognised in his speech that a major reconstruction of the coal industry could not have been achieved without unacceptable social cost without a scheme such as this. I hope that he will reject the criticisms —some of them implicit and some of them confused because they were associated with congratulations—that

[Mr. Beith]

have come from Conservative Members. My hon. Friends and I and Labour Members have warmly welcomed the steps that he has taken to put right what would otherwise have been a serious injustice.

1.30 am

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I welcome the scheme in that it back-dates the original package to restructure the coal mining industry. Basically, early retirement has been provided for miners to put them in the same position as employees in many other industries. It was wrong to say in the original negotiations, "It doesn't matter, fellows—you can take your redundancy and effectively you will be retired; there will be a nod and a wink and you will not be asked to take part in any restart scheme; you will not have to look for another job, but you will be able to take unemployment benefit." That is a rather slipshod approach.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashby: Perhaps I may finish my point before giving way.

A rather slipshod approach was adopted and it is a great pity that that was not recognised at the beginning.

There were many other industries which needed restructuring and in which employees worked long and hard hours doing dirty jobs. Britain has moved from heavy industry to light industry, and the system that we have introduced in the coal mining industry could have been used in many other areas. It is clear that there has been great injustice over the years. I accept that the miners suffered an injustice and I am grateful that it has been rectified. In any other restructuring of an industry we must ensure that we take account of the overall package. Let us be fair to all, not just to those in one industry.

1.32 am

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): I am surprised that so many Conservative Members are in their places to welcome the order. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) has said that not many of them were affected by the background that led to the introduction of the scheme and not many faced constituency problems.

I had a problem last year when a constituent committed suicide after he was put on a restart scheme. As the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said, this is no laughing matter. It is even less funny when we find that certain areas have been targeted for the restart scheme. My constituents were confronted with specific dates when 8,000 redundant mineworkers were to be brought in for interviews. I was informed of the dates, and it was obvious that the Department of Employment had a phased programme for bringing in redundant miners to complete their restart application forms and their interviews. I should imagine that that is a matter of record. I ask the Minister whether he will supply the terms of the record to hon. Members who are interested in them. We shall then be able to establish whether certain mining areas were targeted before other areas.

Perhaps I should remind Conservative Members that the redundant mineworkers payment scheme started in 1968, when miners received £200 or £300. They did not enjoy concessionary coal or weekly payments. The restart scheme was not introduced until the 1980s. The RMPS was not updated to its present level until 1983.

It is rather surprising to find in the Union of Democratic Mineworkers newspaper of last month a short quote from the Secretary of State for Energy suggesting that Roy Link was responsible for the order. It makes me wonder why the Minister bothered to come to the Dispatch Box today to tell us about it—it might have been better to announce it at the UDM conference at Weymouth. I ask the Minister again to supply a list of the targeted areas for the phasing in of restart interviews.

1.34 am

Mr. Michael Spicer: The last point that was raised by the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) sounds highly unlikely, but I will certainly look into it.

I am grateful for the warm and sincere comments that were made by many hon. Members. The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) said that he thought that the order would receive a unanimous welcome. I thought that it did. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was pretty sour throughout the debate, but hon. Members might have expected that from him. It has to be said that he has been pressing this matter upon us over several months. I should have thought that we would have detected from him a sense of exaltation and gratitude, but we did not.

Mr. Skinner: Tempt me a bit more.

Mr. Spicer: I will not tempt the hon. Gentleman. He has already made his feelings clear.

I am sorry that I did not add my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) to the roll of honour of those whom I mentioned—I am happy to do so—and who have been pressing hard on this matter.

I have nothing more to say to the House, other than that we have done the right thing tonight, and I hope that the House will approve the order.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payment Schemes) (Amendment) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 15th June, be approved.

BRUNEI (APPEALS) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90(6) (Second Reading Committees), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

Ordered,

That Mr. Harry Barnes be added to the Select Committee on European Legislation.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Health Service (South Glamorgan)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

1.36 am

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I hope that this debate as the latest in a series of attempts to resolve the future of the Health Service in south Glamorgan will have achieved its primary purpose by the time the Minister sits down and that we will at last have a decision on the 10-year hospital plan.

Massive disquiet has built up during nearly two years since public consideration of the health authority's 10-year plan started. It is more than 10 months since the document reached the Secretary of State for Wales. At that time, I urged him to reject the plan and to send the health authority back to the drawing board because of the manifest defects contained within it. Indeed, this is already a second attempt as, in the words used by the Secretary of State for Wales in his letter to me on 29 June, south Glamorgan's first round plan

"was not approved because of significant inherent weaknesses"

That means that the future of the Health Service in south Glamorgan has been under a cloud of uncertainty for far too long and desperately requires an injection of support and confidence from the Government. The Minister will be aware of many requests for a proper sense of urgency to be given to the matter. I refer to the terms of early-day motion 990 in my name and early-day motion 880 standing in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith).

The Minister will be aware also that concern was highlighted during the Vale of Glamorgan by-election, when the public gave their views to the Government in no uncertain terms. That concern was partly to do with local issues, including the future of Sully hospital, but it was accentuated by massive public rejection of the Health Service White Paper. After the election, a plea to the Secretary of State for Wales to back off was given in early-day motion 879.

It appears, however, that the Government are hell-bent on introducing the proposals of the Health Service White Paper into Wales, and neither the Secretary of State for Wales nor the Minister can avoid complicity in that intent which undermines and threatens confidence in the Health Service. The Secretary of State for Wales, in his letter to me on 29 June about the planning activities of health authorities in Wales, states that strategies will have to be "framed in the light of the White Paper".

He goes on to state that

"the fundamental principles of the NHS remain unchanged under the White Paper,"

which appears to be a ritual incantation by which Government Ministers hope to evade criticism and is simply untrue. But he then confirms that

"the future roles of those involved in securing the delivery of service will change, and it is recognised that these changes will require a reorientation of the planning process to a new environment".

Put into simple English, that means that, during the 10 months that the 10-year plan has been in the Minister's in-tray, things have changed and it now needs to be assessed against the background of the White Paper proposals.

I challenge the Minister, in his reply to this debate, to give just that context. I have already quoted the Secretary of State for Wales in support of my contention that we need to know how the White Paper will operate in Wales in order to judge the Government's decision on the hospital plan, but if further evidence is needed, just look at his words in the Welsh day debate on 1 March when he promised an early debate, confirmed that special factors in Wales required the White Paper to be implemented in a different way from England, and promised us separate and specific documents setting out how this would work. We are still waiting; everyone working in the Health Service in Wales is still waiting and the public in Wales are still waiting.

In a letter bearing the same date, ironically, Mr. John Wyn Owen, director of the NHS in Wales, stated:

"detailed implementation of the proposals has to reflect the different organisational arrangements and the needs and circumstances of different parts of the United Kingdom".

The hope in the Welsh Office bunker now appears to be that it may get away with just the vague generalisations about Wales in chapter 11 of the White Paper. However, that just is not anywhere near adequate and I can tell the Minister that the Government simply will not get away with it. Let him now, tonight, tell us what has been decided about the south Glamorgan 10-year plan and precisely how that will fit into his right hon. Friend's plans for the Health Service in Wales as a whole.

There are many points to be clarified, but, just to give a flavour, it would help if he will say tonight that there will be no hospital opt-outs in Wales. That will help us assess the validity of the hospital pattern in the county. The Secretary of State for Wales has tried to convey a softer tone than his colleagues in the Department of Health, but that is only skilful packaging unless his policies and decisions are to be different. As far as south Glamorgan is concerned, I demand that the Minister come clean and tell us how our Health Service will be run in future.

Coming to the contents of the 10-year plan, I will briefly list the main concerns and objections to the draft plan, and ask the Minister to ensure that his response includes specific reference to these points which were made formally to his colleagues at the Welsh Office over the past two years, so they should have been anticipated for him.

First, has the over-ambitious plan for a new district general hospital in the docks been rejected? The Minister should note that the unanimous view of the consultants, academics and others I have spoken to is that if it is built the health authority will not have the money to run it without serious damage and ward closures at the two existing district hospitals at Llandough and Heath—what a group of consultants described as

"bleeding the existing services of all development just as happened when the Heath opened".

Has he taken into full account the reported views of clinicians on the plan? Will he also note that, for two years, development land has been blighted because of this particular proposal and Cardiff has lost actual jobs—I have been into the facts—because of this delay? Has he questioned the health authority on its extremely sketchy evaluation of the medipark which it proposes, but for which there is not room, and what is the result of his evaluation? I have been promised a response from the health authority on this, but it is still awaited and I hope its work has been more dependable and goes into greater detail than appears on present evidence.

[Mr. Alun Michael]

Secondly, has the Welsh Office provided an answer to the question of how to provide south Glamorgan with proper, modern accident and emergency facilities? The Minister may recall that the whole rationale for a new DGH was that it needed to put such facilities somewhere. I have made alternative suggestions in order to provoke proper discussion. Has a proper job now been done on this matter?

Thirdly, has the Welsh Office undertaken a proper evaluation of the costs and practicalities of running the services set out in the plan as approved or amended by the Secretary of State's decision, which we now eagerly await? Will he give me an assurance that this information will be published so that the basis of his decision can be seen and understood? Is the Minister aware of the numerous challenges to the financial basis of the draft plan and has he been into this fully?

Fourthly, has the Welsh Office clarified the role of the neighbourhood hospitals referred to in the plan and will the Minister share that clarification with us? He must be aware that the vagueness on this point has caused great concern. The relationship between the neighbourhood hospitals and community services is not clear. Nor is the expectations on family doctors. The plan for the neighbourhood hospital in Barry is now quite well advanced, so these expectations should be made clear in the Welsh Office decision tonight. Does he not agree that it is ludicrous to conclude this expensive review of hospitals without also undertaking a serious review of primary care, and has he noted the worry on this point expressed by the college of medicine, the family practitioner committee and the local medical committee among others?

Fifthly, what is the timetable for the provision of neighbourhood hospitals? Does the Secretary of State accept the health authority criterion of one per 40,000 population? Does the plan now include a detailed timetable for their provision? This is a point I have pushed repeatedly, as it would be unacceptable to approve a plan which involves the closure of hospitals like the Royal Hamadryad without knowing that they are to be replaced with something better both in terms of health care and in terms of the living environment.

Sixthly, does the decision guarantee a secure future for Llandough hospital and Sully hospital? The Minister will be aware that these are two of the most appreciated and best loved hospitals in the country, and we want them retained. He will also be aware that the proposal to close Sully is the single most unpopular recommendation in the original plan. Tied to Llandough, it can have a secure future with its present usages, plus an expanded role in recuperation and therapy—where could there be a better site?—and it can provide a site for the neighbourhood hospital for the east of the vale of Glamorgan. I warn the Minister not to trifle with the views of people in my area and in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan by giving us a decision that fails to deal satisfactorily with Sully.

Seventhly, will the Minister assure me that the decision takes into account the present constraint on nursing budgets and puts that right? It would be ludicrous to have a decision on plant and buildings which fails to deal with this point. At present, the nursing budget for Llandough, for instance, is inadequate to pay the agreed number of staff because it is assumed that everyone is on the mid point of the scale. In fact, the hospital has stable staff, and this crazy system is a penalty for having loyal and well motivated nurses. It is a penalty for success, and that is why one ward is closed, staffing is on a knife-edge and the loyalty of people is being tested to the extreme. With the Welsh Office insisting on £2·1 million of cuts in this financial year, it looks as if the Government have a deliberate policy of uncertainty and demoralisation, so will the Minister offer us some reassurance and reverse this trend? Will he agree with me that any plan will have its problems if it is based on inadequate funding which continues to fall further and further behind the need?

Eighthly, does the decision take account of the need for the integration of the hospital plan—for the proposals from the health authority cannot be properly termed a health plan—with the services provided by family doctors and other community-based health services? There are many detailed concerns on this front of which the Welsh Office is well aware, and a decision which fails to answer this point will be empty and meaningless. Again, the White Paper is relevant. One doctor told me at the weekend that for the first time he wondered whether it was worth carrying on rather than taking early retirement because the Government will devalue the preventive and developmental work he has enjoyed, force him away from the patient care which brought him into medicine and push him into being a part-time accountant.

Will the Minister reassure us and tell us he is listening to the passionately expressed views of doctors and that Wales will be spared the policy of conflict and insult being pursued by the Secretary of State for Health and his pale shadow in Wales, the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan)? It is impossible to underline this particular point enough. I have met doctors and received letters from doctors and listened to doctors. They resent the failure of the Government to listen to the voice of experience, they resent the threat to the relationship between doctor and patient, they reject the naive assumption that better health care will result from making a doctor undertake accountancy tasks, and they stress, from a professional point of view, that the man and woman in the street is right to fear the introduction of shopping around for the best buy when applied to medical treatment.

Will the Minister agree that we can do without this approach and that, in Wales at least, doctors will be regarded as human beings and professionals who need to be involved in the future design of our Health Service? That positive approach to doctors, I urge the Minister, is essential to make any plan work. Hundreds of my constituents have written sensible and thoughtful letters supporting the doctors' argument. Will he also reflect on the words of a surgeon who recently stressed to me that, as well as the nurses and technicians, the porters and ancillary workers are also vital members of his team, and that he was shocked and ashamed at the figures on their pay packets. Will the Minister set this plan in the context of humanity and teamwork?

Ninthly, will the Minister accept that the Welsh Office decision—unless it refers the whole business back to the health authority—must involve wholesale changes to the plan and that he should therefore allow a period of public discussion and comment before the Welsh Office decisions become final? I appreciate that individual closures, for instance, are subject to a specific procedure of comment

even after the overall plan is agreed, but the overall plan is fundamental to the future of our Health Service in south Glamorgan and should be seen to stand or fall on its own merits as an overall plan.

Tenth and finally, will the Minister tell us whether we will now have a plan which allows the public and everyone in the Health Service to plan ahead with confidence and enthusiasm, or is it a flexible friend for the administrators to manipulate as they will? He will be aware that the plan has been described by the health authority both in terms of certainty and uncertainty, and it is very important for us to know how dependable the decisions in it are. Will the Minister be very specific on this point?

I have concentrated on the main aspects of the plan, but the Minister must know that there are serious worries on all aspects of the future of our Health Service. Ambulance services, waiting lists, outpatient clinics, the pay of ancillary staff—described to me by one senior administrator as "scandalously and dangerously low"—community services, properly integrated paediatric services, preventative medicine, services for the elderly, specific services for women, and the threat to stability of the new general practitioners' contract are all important, too.

The key to the whole way in which the Health Service operates is the problem of chronic underfunding. Ministers may reflect the blinkered approach of the Prime Minister and claim that there is no problem of underfunding, but there is a serious problem and Ministers who ignore that basic problem and allow the Health Service to bleed to death will not easily be forgiven, certainly in Wales.

It will not be enough for Ministers to claim that decision-making and the deployment of resources have been devolved to the health authority. The Secretary of State appoints his majority to the health authority, and will do so even more under the White Paper. They are his creatures and most would not be there if elected, so he has to carry the can. The Health Service is the best-loved public service in south Glamorgan, and we want it treated with care and respect.

My constituents in Cardiff, South and Penarth want to know that they can depend on a well-planned Health Service in south Glamorgan, funded adequately to meet their particular needs as and when required, and staffed by people who are as much appreciated by the Government and the health authority as they are by the general public. They want that service set within a Welsh Health Service that is designed to meet the needs of the people of Wales. The Minister's announcements in answer to this debate will be totally inadequate unless I can carry back reassurances to them on each of those points.

1.52 am

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): The hon. Gentleman has expressed his concern about the future of the Health Service in south Glamorgan and, indeed, a wider concern. I am sure that he recognises that the decisions of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales on South Glamorgan health authority's strategic plan and the future of cardiac services in south Wales are all-important in that context. It was my right hon. Friend's intention to announce his decisions on those matters today. However, I am sure that it would be helpful to the House if I outlined the main points now.

Some 59 representations have been received by my right hon. Friend about the strategic plan since it was submitted in October 1988. Those were made by a wide range of people and organisations, including hon. Members, members of the public, community health councils, local councillors and individual medical personnel.

My hon. Friend welcomes the broad objectives underlying the guiding principles for the 10-year strategy as set out in the plan. Those are reprovision of the accident and emergency service; early provision of a new cardiac unit; improved specialty groupings; enhancement of academic and research facilities; improved condition of the estate; and minimum revenue costs in order to finance high-level capital expenditure.

My right hon. Friend has agreed that future acute services should be rationalised and concentrated on three major acute hospital sites—the University hospital of Wales, Llandough, and a new hospital on a third site to be decided by the authority. The new hospital, which will have an important teaching function, will provide accident and emergency services with related specialties from a location with good road communications with the rest of the county.

My right hon. Friend has also agreed and welcomed the concept of neighbourhood hospitals which bring elements of health care closer to local communities and welcomes, in broad terms, the more involved role intended for general practitioners and primary health care teams. However, he feels that the authority should work closely with the South Glamorgan local medical committee and family practitioner committee working party on neighbourhood hospitals in drawing up those plans.

On regional services, the authority's proposals are broadly in line with departmental policies, and we would expect South Glamorgan district health authority to continue to play a major role in providing regional services to patients from all parts of Wales.

One aspect of the strategic plans that attracted particular attention was the suggestion that the main cardiac surgery and cardiology unit should be moved to Llandough hospital from the University hospital of Wales, in conflict with the Department's existing policy of development at the UHW. Clearly the location of the regional cardiac unit would have a significant effect on the strategic plan as a whole.

Before commenting on my right hon. Friend's decision on cardiac services in south Wales, I shall correct a false impression created by some hon. Members. Since the then Secretary of State for Wales accepted in 1984 the Welsh Medical Committee's report on cardiac services, it has been Welsh Office policy to expand the unit at the UHW. There has been considerable success in increasing the number of open-heart operations performed there. During the 1980s, it has doubled. However, it has not expanded rapidly enough, and there have been difficulties in overcoming the obstacles to increased throughput. It is not true to say that no progress has been made or that there has been no investment. Real development has been achieved and we funded it—but we want to do better because the toll of death and disability from heart disease in Wales demands it.

My right hon. Friend accepts the Royal College of Physicians' estimates of required throughput, and he has slightly improved on it so that we can aim at achieving 1,200 open-heart operations per year. My right hon. Friend noted the royal college's recommendation that the

[Mr. Wyn Roberts]

centre of excellence that Wales needs should be located at the University hospital of Wales, where the necessary clinical, diagnostic and other support services would be available, and which is the preferred academic base. Most respondents to the consultation supported that view, and so does my right hon. Friend. He believes that the UHW, not Llandough hospital, is the right location for the main cardiac unit.

The royal college report argued that such a unit should perform all the open-heart operations required. At 1,200 adult and paediatric open-heart operations per year, it would be a very sizeable unit. Not uniquely so, but large —particularly in the context of the UHW. The health authority argued in its strategic plan that that was not practicable, and my right hon. Friend shares that view. He considers that it would distort the critical balance of the UHW and that the construction phase would cause unacceptable disruption to services and to the comfort of patients and staff. As a consequence, he decided that the adult unit at UHW should be expanded to perform 800 open-heart operations a year and that a second unit should be built after a thorough appraisal of the options.

The health authority has today been asked to set the development of the main unit in train. In addition, it has been invited to submit proposals for increasing the number of cardiac operations commissioned through the authority from 600 to 800 a year.

South Glamorgan health authority's plan contains broad proposals for the closure of hospitals and other substantial variations in the service provided by the district health authority. My right hon. Friend's decision on the overall strategy, including his approval in principle to the rationalisation proposals, in no way removes the need for the health authority to secure individual approval for such changes at the appropriate time. If the authority decides to pursue a particular change, each proposed closure or substantial variation in the service provided must be subject to separate and detailed formal consultation nearer the time of implementation before they could be effected. In the event of local opposition, my right hon. Friend would consider appeals and decide the matter.

Copies of my right hon. Friend's decisions on the strategic plan and cardiac services in south Wales will be available from the Vote Office later today. Following my right hon. Friend's decisions, the future planning work to be undertaken by the health authority will take account of the elements of the submitted plan on which he has called for further work. These will be included in a full and revised strategy as part of the second round of strategic planning in common with the other district health authorities of Wales. The preparation of the new strategy will enable the authority to take full account of the likely changes brought about by the Government's White Paper "Working for Patients" and the guidance given by my right hon. Friend will provide a firm basis for the authority to review its plan. We look forward to receiving the authority's new plan in due course. Meanwhile, later this year, the Welsh Office proposes to issue guidance for all authorities for undertaking the second strategic planning round. It will, of course, be essential that a close dialogue is maintained between the district health authority and the Welsh Office.

I sincerely hope that all who are concerned with, or have an interest in, the future pattern of health services in south Glamorgan will see my right hon. Friend's decision as a clear and sound basis on which to build and develop an up-to-date service for the future.

Mr. Michael: Why has the two general district hospitals option, favoured by most professionals, been rejected? Will the Minister confirm that the site of the third GDH will not now be at the Cardiff docks? What is his decision on Sully hospital? Many people await that announcement. Has the hon. Gentleman fully evaluated the costs? Has a decision been taken on the programme for neighbouring hospitals to meet the requirements throughout the county?

Mr. Roberts: I have covered the point about the neighbourhood hospitals.

The plan says that some 2,400 acute beds will be required in the south Glamorgan area. We believe that that figure is somewhat excessive and that it should be about 2,100. Even so, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will recognise, if those beds were to be divided between two hospitals, it would mean about 1,000 acute beds each. That would be a very large hospital, bearing in mind that the University hospital of Wales has some 880 acute beds. That is the basis of the decision in favour of three hospitals, rather than two. I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman where the third hospital will be located. Indeed, we have not told the authority as much. It is for the authority to decide. We have, however, stated that the hospital must be sited in a place where access is good.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has noted what I said about the closure proposals, and that certainly applies to Sully hospital and any other hospital.

As for financing of the strategic plan, it is difficult to anticipate all the financing details in a 10-year plan, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has asked me for a revised and more robust financial plan. That is amply described in the decision letter.

We hope thereby and with these decisions to build up a worthy service which can realistically be achieved for the benefit of the people for whom it is provided.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at four minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 12 July 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the King's Cross Railways Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words 'under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)' were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Foreign Affairs Council

1. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what items he expects to be discussed at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 17 July.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): Discussion is expected on follow-up to the European Council and on relations with the United States, eastern Europe, Gulf states and African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

Mr. Baldry: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Will she confirm that the Foreign Affairs Council collectively will leave China in no doubt as to Europe's total abhorrence of recent events in that country? Will it clearly signal that any help in relation to China's future economic performance will depend upon its demonstrating a preparedness to behave towards the people of Hong Kong in a manner that commands the support of the European Community? Is not the best guarantee for the people of Hong Kong the preparedness of Europe and the civilised world in general to act together in their relations with China?

Mrs. Chalker: China should be in no doubt about our view. In Madrid on 27 June, the member states agreed on four actions: the suspension of military co-operation; an embargo on trade in arms with China; the suspension of ministerial and other high-level contacts; and the postponement of all new co-operation projects.

At the United Nations in Geneva we raised the issue of human rights in China and we are taking every opportunity to enforce our condemnation of the violent repression of peaceful demonstrators and the tragic loss of life. Yesterday, European Community colleagues agreed that the troika should make a demarche in Peking to underline the Community's position and to convey the request for independent observers to have access to trials and to prisons.

China is in absolutely no doubt that Hong Kong and the remainder of the world believe that matters went very badly wrong, and that it is for China to show its preparedness to work with the remainder of the world.

Mr. Alton: When Ministers are considering Hong Kong, will they also examine the position of Portuguese citizens in Macau who will be given the right to live in any European Community country after Macau returns to China? Does the right hon. Lady accept that it will create a difficulty—indeed, a major discrepancy—if Hong Kong citizens are not treated in the same way?

Mrs. Chalker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I shall be meeting my Portuguese opposite number next week and we shall discuss these matters.

Mr. Temple-Morris: During that meeting will my right hon. Friend raise the increasingly important questions of the enlargement of the Community and what constitutes Europe? Will she bear in mind her distinguished school days at Roedean when, I hope, she was taught that Turkey was not part of Europe? Does she agree that the sooner that that is made clear to everyone, including Turkey, the better off we will all be?

Mrs. Chalker: Turkey's application to the Community, which is currently with the Commission, will produce an opinion by the end of the year. Whatever the aspirations of Turkey and many other countries, I remind my hon. Friend that the Community is united in the belief that its top priority is to complete the single market. Enlargement is a matter very much for the future.

Mr. Robertson: Should not the next Foreign Affairs Council consider the whole question of economic help for eastern European countries that are struggling towards more democratic systems? Has not the West's response so far been feeble, half-hearted and lamentably inadequate, given the economic plight facing the democratic reformist forces in Poland and Hungary?

If the West is genuinely interested in the return of political choice to those nations and in keeping a check on the forces of reaction that threaten them, is not a more generous and imaginative response from Europe urgent? When will this country put in hard cash, even if it is tied and conditional? Sympathetic words about freedom are a poor substitute.

Mrs. Chalker: That matter was discussed thoroughly yesterday under the heading of European co-operation. The Community is in the process of negotiating an economic and commercial agreement with Poland, and the position in respect of other countries will be investigated in detail when the opportunity arises. We have no doubt whatsoever that those countries should be assisted to make their own moves towards real democracy and to the modernisation that they need.

Mr. Michael Morris: When my right hon. Friend meets her colleagues, will she raise the worrying problems arising in southern Asia, particularly in Sri Lanka? It appears that unless the Indian presence leaves Sri Lanka by 29 July there will be a mass exodus to Europe.

Mrs. Chalker: That matter is not on next week's agenda, but we shall see whether it can be raised during the discussion that we shall have at lunchtime.

European Commission

2. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the President of the European Commission; and what he expects to discuss.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I expect to meet President Delors at the economic summit in Paris from 14 to 16 July, where a range of international economic issues will be discussed.

Mr. Orme: When the Foreign Secretary meets the president, will he discuss the social charter? Will he also withdraw his recent offensive remarks about the charter and recognise that it means a great deal to working people throughout the Community? Why is Britain alone in opposing it?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not feel the need to withdraw any offensive remark. I made it very plain that we attach great importance to the social dimension of improving economic co-operation in Europe. We do not believe that a Communitywide charter imposing obligations across the board is the best way of achieving that. To impose a whole range of legislation of a uniform kind on different societies would not be in the best interests of any of them, and would be inimical to our successful fight against unemployment. The best test of a social charter is the way that the United Kingdom has succeeded better than any other European country in bringing down unemployment.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is high time that the European Community built on the Venice declaration? Following the Likud block vote on the peace process in the middle east, is it not time to look again at Israel's privileged commercial position in relation to the Community?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend may not have noticed that at the conclusion of the European Council meeting in Madrid last week we issued a long declaration on the middle east which built, as he wants, on the Venice declaration. It made a number of significant additions and drew attention to the continuing deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories and to the action that should be taken. Yesterday, European Foreign Ministers agreed that the question of giving economic help to the occupied territories should be examined.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Secretary of State press for the European Community's ambassadors' report on human rights abuses against the Kurds in Iraq to be made public? Will he also condemn, and ask the Community to condemn, the mass deportation of the Kurds from northern to southern Iraq which is a disgraceful abuse of human rights? Will he press for journalists and other observers to be allowed into the Kurdistan section of Iraq as soon as possible?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Lady's points coincide with the views of the Government. I shall seek an opportunity to bring them to the attention of the Community's Foreign Ministers.

Sir Richard Body: To revert to the supplementary question of the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), will my right hon. and learned Friend remind Mr. Delors when he next meets him that he purloined the term European social charter; that it was drafted in the Council of Europe and ratified by our country very soon afterwards; and that we were in the forefront of the countries that put it into practice?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the parallel between the documents, although "purloin" overstates the case slightly. At the Rhodes European Council it was concluded that a study should be made of the existing provisions of the Council of Europe social charter. There is a sharp distinction between that and the present draft of the European Community social charter: the latter would impose obligations across a wide spectrum, in contrast to the former. My hon. Friend is also right to point out that we are among the countries that have ratified the charter; I think that I am right in saying that three Community countries have not yet done so.

Mr. Kaufman: Following the question put by my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), may I ask whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman recalls that, when he last answered questions and I asked him what was Marxist about the social charter, he cited the placing of workers on the boards of companies? Will he therefore—drawing on his knowledge of the work of Karl Marx—provide marked copies of the passages that prescribe that workers should be placed on the boards of companies, and draw them to the attention of Chancellor Kohl of the Federal Republic of Germany, where it is

Government policy to place workers on boards? I am sure that Chancellor Kohl will be dismayed to learn that he has been pursuing Marxist policies.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The distinction that we wish to draw is between an approach that depends on dividing industry into two sides and our own approach, which has been exemplified by the massive extension of employee share ownership. At the time of my first Budget about half a dozen schemes were in existence; about 1,600 are available now. We do not consider it helpful, when Britain has been making such massive progress in that respect, to begin creating a new system founded on the division of industry.

If I were to seek advice about any aspect of the teachings of Karl Marx, I should be delighted to appoint the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) as my research assistant.

European Political Co-operation

4. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on the outcome of the Ministers European political co-operation meeting of 11 July.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I attended the meeting in Paris. Developments in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe were the main subjects. We discussed Mr. Gorbachev's visits to Paris and Strasbourg. Our agenda also covered the middle east, southern Africa, the Horn of Africa, Cambodia and China. I stressed the importance to Hong Kong of international support. We agreed statements on Cambodia and the conference on security and co-operation in Europe, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Taylor: Was my right hon. and learned Friend able to discuss with his Community colleagues President Gorbachev's latest plans for the architecture of the common European home? Did they note President Gorbachev's warning that the superior western European economic system should not try to tempt the eastern bloc countries away from their Socialist principles? Does that not mean that the eastern European countries are free to live in their own rooms in the common European home, as long as they employ Soviet interior decorators?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We did not discuss the matter in such meticulous architectural detail as my hon. Friend suggests, but we agreed that Mr. Gorbachev's speech called for no direct response from us. The Twelve will continue to make their best contribution to the development of East-West co-operation by underlining, above all, the attractiveness of the western model. We emphasised the fact that the common European home is based on European Community designs on western European foundations, and we hope that countries in the rest of Europe will be free to follow that example.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: In pursuing the idea that Community countries should co-operate over their attitude to China, does the Foreign Secretary believe that his position is somewhat clouded by the fact that the British Government, through the Department of Trade and Industry, are still actively sponsoring trade missions to China? Does that not undermine what he is trying to achieve?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman will find that those matters are being considered separately and very carefully, case by case. For example, the proposed Sino-British Trade Council exhibition which was to have taken place in Peking next November has been postponed, and other matters are being treated in a similar way. However, there is no intention—nor should there be—of imposing an economic embargo or economic sanctions on China. None of our European Community partners has adopted that view; nor has the United States or Japan.

Sir Peter Hordern: Was my right hon. and learned Friend able to pursue the goal of closer European economic co-operation by reminding the Council of Ministers of the admirable speech of Karl Otto Pöhl in Munich on 22 June in which the president of the Bundesbank said that he saw no great purpose in forming either a common European currency or a European central bank? Would it not be better to pursue the policy of the president of the Bundesbank—of a step-by-step development—than to go forward in rash philosophical leaps, which seems to be the metier of Mr. Delors?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I share my hon. Friend's admiration of the speech by Karl Otto Pöhl. It was very forcibly drawn to the attention of the European Council at the meeting in Madrid, which was attended by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and myself. It was also no doubt in the minds of the Finance Ministers who met on Monday this week to discuss the matter. It was they who discussed it, not we the Foreign Ministers. However, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer certainly underlined the very important point that has been made by my hon. Friend: that we must address the matter stage by stage, according to the principles that he has outlined.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In the light of the great concern that is being expressed by the people of Hong Kong about their future and of the fact that in his first reply the Foreign Secretary said that these matters were raised at the meeting, what is the position of the various Foreign Ministers? Is there an understanding that the problem cannot necessarily be resolved within the United Kingdom? Do people accept that there must be some form of international settlement?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The primacy of the United Kingdom's position is accepted on all sides. The Foreign Ministers at their meeting this week recognised—as on previous occasions when they have discussed it—the importance of bringing home to the People's Republic of China our shock at what has happened there. That was why we agreed yesterday that the Community ambassadors in Peking would make specific representations about the need for observers at trials and in relation to imprisonment. We also sustained the decisions already taken in relation to economic, political and military matters and agreed that those principles would be followed.

Middle East

5. **Sir Dennis Walters:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make a statement on progress towards peace in the middle east.

10. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the middle east peace process.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Waldegrave): In a major statement in Madrid last month the European Council appealed to the parties to seize the present opportunity to achieve peace. The Twelve made it clear that the election proposals put forward by Mr. Shamir could contribute to the peace process but that the PLO must participate in negotiations. We fear that the Likud decisions last week, if translated into Israeli Government policy, will make progress much more difficult.

Sir Dennis Walters: Does my hon. Friend recognise that the Shamir offer to hold free elections on the West Bank has now been exposed for the fraud that it always was? He was saying privately weeks ago that it was merely a device to buy time. Now he has had to come out publicly. What do we intend to do now to get the peace process moving in a serious manner?

Mr. Waldegrave: We intend to deal with the Israeli Government, not with internal party factions. We shall urge the Israeli Government that the peace proposal that they made had the germ of an idea in it, that it should be developed and that it should not be limited in the way that the Likud motions seek to limit it. We shall urge the other side—the Palestinians and the PLO—not yet to despair of developing those election proposals.

Mr. Wood: Does my hon. Friend think that any international measures could be taken to ensure free and fair elections in the occupied territories? Is my hon. Friend pressing on Israel and the United States the need to have an international peace conference before there is further and much more serious loss of life?

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes, and the Twelve reinforced that commitment to a peace conference. Our sense of urgency is increasing day by day with every new tragedy, including the terrible killing of 14 people in a bus on the way to Jerusalem. Every one of those tragedies, on either side, shows how little time there is left.

Mr. Steel: The Minister cannot separate the identity of the leader of the Likud from the identity of Prime Minister Shamir, when they are the same person. Does he think that the recent statements from Mr. Shamir go back on the undertakings that he gave to Her Majesty's Government, the Twelve and the United States Government? Will he therefore take a more vigorous stance on the matter?

Mr. Waldegrave: I understand the right hon. Gentleman's concern. It would be unwise for me to predict the final outcome of the Israeli Government's position. As we know, there may be changes in the coalition. We stand by our view that that proposal for an election seemed to offer the hope of progress, and the last thing that anyone should be seeking now is to abort it before it is properly born.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The Minister must realise that Mr. Shamir's statement last Wednesday, as Prime Minister of Israel and as the leader of the Likud party, had two clauses. The first sought to ensure that there should be no negotiations with the PLO, no Palestinian state in any part of the Eretz Israel and no sovereignty over any part of the Eretz Israel. Clause 2, which is far more important, sought to make all those decisions binding, in the Cabinet and in the Knesset, on all Likud members. How can we expect the Palestinians or anyone else to accept that any Israeli peace plan remains?

Mr. Waldegrave: I feel no more optimism than the hon. Gentleman does after the events of that Likud meeting. However, I am well aware, as is the hon. Gentleman, that some members of Likud, such as Mr. Ezer Weizman, take a very different line. Before we despair of the Israeli Government's position, let us finally see what it is.

Sir Philip Goodhart: Does my hon. Friend really think that the peace process in the middle east will be helped if we refuse to sell gas masks to Israel at the same time as we contemplate selling military aircraft to Iraq, a country which has used poison gas against its own citizens?

Mr. Waldegrave: The latter decision has not yet been taken. I hope that the House will recognise the difficulty of the former very emotive decision. Equipping the armed forces of a state for fighting with chemical weapons is dangerous and difficult. We, as the principal sponsor of efforts to achieve a worldwide ban on chemical weapons, must be very careful about that. The application that was informally submitted was not simply for children. If such an application was clearly only for civilian and defensive use, we would consider it very carefully. The House would be the first to criticise us if we were seen to be equipping armed forces for chemical warfare.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the Minister of State join me and my hon. Friends in sending sympathy to the relatives of all who were killed in the bus outrage last week and to the relatives of the Palestinians who are being killed every day in the occupied territories? Does he agree that those sterile, pointless and tragic deaths will continue as long as there is no settlement in the middle east and that instead of putting pressure on the Israeli Labour party to remain members of a Government who are going back on what he agrees was a minimal but perhaps helpful commitment, the United States Secretary of State should be putting pressure on the Likud to go to the conference table? It is unacceptable that one bigoted faction should stand in the way of ending this terrible confrontation.

Mr. Waldegrave: I gladly associate myself with what the right hon. Gentleman said, as I am sure do my right hon. and hon. Friends. I have been trying not yet to despair of the Israeli Government's position as I hope that there are people in Likud who will take a wiser view and prevent the Israeli Government from drawing back from an already minimalist position.

Will the House and the right hon. Gentleman forgive me if I ask him to join me in sending one other condolence which is relevant today—to the McCarthy family and other friends of John McCarthy on the death of Mrs. Sheila McCarthy, the mother of the British journalist held in Lebanon? The heartlessness of his captors in the face of his mother's appeals to be reunited with her son before she died can invite only universal condemnation. Obviously, we continue to make every effort to secure his release. We beg those who are in a position of influence to help with that release to do so unconditionally. We recognise that the break in relations with Iran, which was not of our making, has made the task more difficult, but we hope that

the new leadership in Iran will be willing to help in that task. These people are high on our agenda and are not forgotten.

Gibraltar

6. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the application of European Economic Community directives to Gibraltar.

Mrs. Chalker: All European Community directives apply to Gibraltar except those in areas from which Gibraltar was excluded in the arrangements for United Kingdom accession; those from which Gibraltar is specifically excluded; and those whose subject matter is clearly of no relevance to Gibraltar.

Mr. Colvin: Because of the heavy impact of European Community decisions and laws on the people of Gibraltar, no territory would have had a better turn-out in the recent elections to the European Parliament had those people been entitled to vote. The six Members of the European Parliament from Luxembourg represent, on average, 35,000 voters. Does my right hon. Friend agree that on that basis, Gibraltar could have one MEP in the European Parliament?

Mr. Foulkes: Another Labour Member.

Mr. Colvin: Perhaps, but so what? Will my right hon. Friend use her best endeavours to secure for the people of Gibraltar the representation in the European Parliament that they deserve and require?

Mrs. Chalker: There is no comparison between Luxembourg, which is an independent state, and Gibraltar, which is not. The interests of the people of Gibraltar have been well represented in the Community by Her Majesty's Government and in the European Parliament by the group of United Kingdom MEPs known as the Gibraltar and Europe representation group. They have served the interests of Gibraltar well, and I know that they will go on doing so. I refer my hon. Friend to the observations on this matter that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made on 20 June 1984. They still stand.

Mr. Dalyell: Have British Ministers any reason to disbelieve the claim by the Spanish authorities that the IRA team had six members, not three as claimed? This is the same question that I put yesterday to the Ministry of Defence.

Mrs. Chalker: I do not believe that there is any validity in what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Greece

7. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with the Greek Government following that country's general election results.

Mrs. Chalker: We wish the new Greek Government well and look forward to working with them both in the Community and in the Alliance.

Mr. Cash: I endorse what my right hon. Friend has said. Does she recall that it was the former Greek Government who introduced the social charter into the cauldron of European politics? Will she encourage the new Greek Government to adopt a slightly less abrasive approach?

Mrs. Chalker: I am well aware that my hon. Friend shares my view about the proposals that may have been drawn up by the Greek commissioner. The proposals that came forward for the social charter were agreed by a majority of commissioners and are Commission proposals. Discussion on this matter is taking place in Brussels. However attractive the idea may seem, the change of Government in Greece does not affect the position of the commissioner responsible.

Mr. Dykes: There is a certain amount of puzzlement in Athens because, when it comes to social charter provisions, the differences between countries and traditions are too great to make any similarity possible whereas in respect of the internal market, for economic and financial reasons, it is possible for us to achieve total harmony within a few years. Why is there a difference in the British Government's attitude to those two aspects?

Mrs. Chalker: As my right hon. and learned Friend said earlier, the difference is that we believe that the social dimension should help to improve economic performance across Europe. It is clear that the Council of Europe social charter, which provided a framework, was a very good text, but it did not extend to deciding at European level those matters that we properly believe should be decided by each nation state. We know that liberalisation and deregulation are the only way to achieve economic growth and a reduction in unemployment. We believe that we should be entitled, in accordance with the Commission's principle of subsidiarity, to decide which way the country goes.

Afghanistan

8. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about relations with Afghanistan.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have no substantive dealings with the Kabul regime, which has been rejected by a majority of the Afghan people. We look forward to the day when the regime is replaced by a truly representative Government with whom we could have normal relations.

Mr. Brown: Surely the Secretary of State has to come to terms with the fact, however unpalatable, that Dr. Najibullah's Government have survived, strengthened their position and defeated the forces of reaction militarily. Even Conservative Members have to come to terms with that. It is suggested by many, and even by moderate rebel leaders, that there should be some understanding and means of negotiation so that this so-called Afghan problem can be resolved. Will the Secretary of State take the initiative and arrange a conference so that the various warring parties can come round the table and reach a settlement which will mean peace in Afghanistan, which is so important to everyone?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The force that destroyed peace in Afghanistan 10 years ago was the invading Soviet army.

The Najibullah regime was installed and armed by the Russians and was upheld against the wishes of the majority of the Afghan people. It controls less than one fifth of the country and its so-called reconciliation policy has failed. I prefer to accept the judgment of the 5 million Afghan refugees who have still fled the country and decline to return there to that of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Greg Knight: Did my right hon. and learned Friend take the opportunity recently of thanking Mrs. Bhutto and her country for all the help and support they have given to the people of Afghanistan over the past 10 years? Those people are still suffering the backlash of Soviet occupation.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I took that opportunity. The people and Government of Pakistan have borne a heavy load throughout that time and are much to be thanked by the world community and the people of Afghanistan.

Mr. Anderson: Is not the reality that the heady forecasts of a quick victory for the mujaheddin of perhaps six months or so ago are no longer valid and there is no realistic chance of a military solution to the internal conflict? The reported decision of the United States Administration to finance one more fighting season is wrong. It will increase the fatalities in that war-ravaged area. Will the Government, therefore, have the courage to say to the United States that the decision to finance one more fighting season is wrong and will they urge negotiations as the only basis for future stability in that country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The wish on which everyone is united is the emergence of a Government representative of the people of Afghanistan as a whole and that means a Government to whom the 5 million refugees can safely return, not the Government being sustained by the support of Soviet arms. The hon. Gentleman must recall that before the Russian withdrawal, massive quantities of Soviet arms were entrusted to the Najibullah regime and those supplies have continued in large quantities until today.

Hungary

11. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Hungarian Government; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend met Hungarian State Minister Imre Pozsgay on 25 April. I have just returned from a three-day visit to Hungary where I met Prime Minister Nemeth, Mr. Pozsgay and a wide range of Government, party and Opposition leaders. I also laid a wreath at the grave of Imry Nagy and placed flowers at the memorial to Raoul Wallenberg. I expressed the strong support of the Government, and I believe the House, for the process of reform taking place in Hungary.

Mr. Greenway: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that I had the honour to teach many children driven from Hungary at the time of the invasion by Russian tanks? They were very fine children and their parents came with them. Many others were driven out by the murderous regime of János Kádar. My right hon. and learned Friend has the support of all parties in welcoming the improvements in Hungary. However, will he assure the House that the developments in Hungary will be to the advancement of the people of that nation in a truly democratic form and to the elimination of the past wickednesses they have suffered?

Mr. Waldegrave: Progress is very marked, and there is free and open discussion of all the issues that my hon. Friend mentioned, including the past and the rehabilitation of Imre Nagy. The reburial on 16 June was truly a watershed. I do not think, however, that any hon. Member should underestimate the deep suspicion with which people in the opposition groups in Hungary view even the most liberal members of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' party which was responsible for those previous regimes.

Mr. Heffer: Is the Minister aware that those Opposition Members who stood four square behind the people of Hungary during the revolution in support of attempts to create a society which was genuinely democratic very much welcome what has been happening in Hungary recently? Is he also aware, however, that some of us feel even today how regrettable it was that we in this country could not give our full attention and support to the people of Hungary because the Government of the time were involved in a silly business—Suez.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am not sure that I can reopen the question of Suez. I am sure that there will be quite a lot of agreement on both sides of the House about that. Having said that, I welcome the hon. Gentleman's powerful support for what is happening in Hungary and above all for the openness with which the truth is being told about 1956 and the years after 1956. The memorial to Imre Nagy is not the only moving sight in that graveyard. One also sees monuments to unknown people, many of whom were executed up to five years later, and the truth is at last being told about that.

Mr. Michael Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in addition to the ministerial contacts that he described, which I greatly welcome, opportunities are, increasingly presenting themselves for British and Hungarian industries to get together to consider opportunities for inward investment in Hungary as a way of assisting the growth of its economy? Is that a task in which the Government could take an interest and involve themselves?

Mr. Waldegrave: We have an investment protection agreement with Hungary, which is very welcome. I am glad to see the United States catching up with Britain in some respects, and we welcome what the President has announced, although I am happy to say that some of the arrangements were already in place. Hungary has never rescheduled her debts and deserves a proper response from Western investment now that she is welcoming it, although we believe that there is still a long way to go in opening up a market economy, as one would expect after 40 years of Communist nightmare.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Minister agree that Hungary is as much a country of central Europe as Austria is? Will the Government take steps to ensure that the European Community regards Hungary in much the same light as Austria, though needing very much more help to assist it towards economic and democratic success?

Mr. Waldegrave: I know that the hon. and learned Gentleman, who has considerable knowledge of these matters, welcomes the fact that the European Community has a very good agreement with Hungary, and I am glad that the Government played some part in carrying that through. It is true that Hungary is a European country and part of European culture, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said resoundingly in her speech at Bruges.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: As one who stood alongside Imre Nagy in 1956 when he proclaimed a new deal for Hungary, and who ended up a prisoner of the Red army for my pains, let me ask my hon. Friend whether he regards the rehabilitation of Imre Nagy and the movement of Hungary back towards freedom as one of the remarkable historical changes that we have witnessed in recent years? Is it not true, as the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlisle) suggested, that we should now be trying to open the door for Hungary to become associated in some way with such western organisations as the Council of Europe and, eventually, the EEC?

Mr. Waldegrave: Hungary does have guest membership —observer status—at the Council of Europe, and that is a good thing. I support what my hon. Friend says. I hope that it means exactly what it says. In his speech to the Council of Europe Mr. Gorbachev said that countries were allowed to choose their own paths. If Hungary is allowed to choose its own path, we know which it will be.

China

12. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has been making to the Government of China on the subject of human rights.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We and our European Community partners have firmly condemned the brutal actions of the Chinese Government. I made this plain to the Chinese chargé d'affaires on 5 June. On 27 June the European Council adopted a declaration on China, which reiterated our condemnation and called on the Chinese authorities to respect human rights. In accordance with this declaration, ambassadors representing the Twelve have been instructed to seek the admission of independent observers to attend trials and visit prisons.

Mr. Hughes: In the light of other countries restricting their trade with China, will the Foreign Secretary say whether the 48 group, which includes BOC, Plessey and Pilkington, is still going ahead with its massive trade mission in November? Are the Government giving that trade mission their blessing? If they are, how can they justify the use of Department of Trade and Industry funds to subsidise it, only a month after the Tiananmen square massacre, and when executions are still taking place and human rights are being abused? Are the Government adopting a mercenary manner by ignoring those horrendous happenings and saying that business will go ahead as usual?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I have told the hon. Gentleman, the Government, in common with all Governments of the world, have in no uncertain fashion expressed their horror at what has taken place. Equally, Her Majesty's Government, in common with all Governments of the Economic Community and of the economic seven—not least that of Hong Kong, strongly urged by the people of Hong Kong—do not believe that it would be right to impose economic sanctions in our relationships with China. I have no doubt about that. Every other Government take the same view. Of course we have postponed consideration of concessional financing for new projects, and of course we are looking carefully at any particular case involving DTI support for trade missions. It is for that reason that the Sino-British trade council announced on 7 July its postponement of the all-British exhibition scheduled for November. The DTI is still in consultation with the 48 group to which the hon. Gentleman referred about its plans to mount a mission to China in the autumn.

Sir Peter Blaker: Is it not in the interests of China to take early steps to restore the people of Hong Kong's confidence in the future of their rights, for example by agreeing that the People's Liberation Army will not be stationed in Hong Kong after 1997 and that the right of interpretation of the Basic Law shall rest unambiguously in Hong Kong?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My right hon. Friend has drawn attention to two articles of the draft Basic Law which were most frequently pressed upon me on my recent visit to Hong Kong. On each of those matters I have already expressed a view which my right hon. Friend has just now expressed.

Mr. Mullin: May I say how much many Opposition Members welcome the Government's rediscovery of human rights in China and hope that they will now extend to Tibet? Who knows, when the Dalai Lama of Tibet next comes to London, perhaps the Foreign Secretary will find time to meet him.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The scale of events in Tibet and of those in Peking recently were completely different. In any event, at the time of the last tragedies in Tibet, Her Majesty's Government made clear their deep concern about what was happening there. As the hon. Member knows, the Dalai Lama did, indeed, come to London.

Mr. Adley: As one of the purposes of maintaining diplomatic relations is to pass to Governments messages that sometimes have to be passed, however unpleasant they may be, will my right hon. Friend, through whatever channel is open to him, convey a message to the Chinese Government, advising them against seeking to influence opinion in western Europe with a propaganda booklet entitled "The June Turbulence in Beijing"? That booklet is unlikely to win them friends, change any minds in the West, or to gain them any respect.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing my attention to the book, which I have not yet studied. I shall certainly do so in the light of his advice. He is no doubt well placed to convey similar advice to the Chinese Government.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the information that the Foreign Secretary gets from missions in China confirm the information that I received today that the purge and repression is much worse than is reported in the western media, and that in the past few weeks, thousands of students have been rounded up in Szechwan province?

Is the Foreign Secretary aware that trade visits and all other contacts are being ruthlessly exploited by the

Chinese Government for propaganda purposes? For both those reasons, will he say that the 48 group's October visit must be cancelled, like the Sino-British trade exhibition? Does he accept that we have a moral responsibility to the demonstrators, to whom we gave our encouragement, to stand by them until all the repression is ended in China?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Nobody doubts the importance of the moral message that the hon. Gentleman is uttering. The entire collection of western Governments has expressed that very strongly. The fact must be faced that Hong Kong, for which the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) claims some responsibility, is intimately dependent, economically and politically, upon what takes place in China. The advice of people in Hong Kong, which is upheld by Governments around the world, is that it would not be helpful to the advancement of the cause of respect for human rights in China to rupture economic links with them.

Mr. Kaufman: Shoddy.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It may be shoddy in the right hon. Gentleman's judgment, but it is the universal judgment of all the countries with whom we have been in consultation.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. and learned Friend find it a fascinating contradiction that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) did not take the same view about the Falklands? Does he agree that we have to face the fact that Hong Kong exists, that we have responsibilities, that we have a very short period in which to ensure the survival of the way of life of Hong Kong, and that that can be achieved only by working with and talking to the Chinese?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Our responsibility to the people of Hong Kong can and should be achieved by making it absolutely plain to the Government of China how shocked we and the rest of the world were by what took place in Peking six weeks ago, and by seeking at the same time a change, including the method of change. We also seek the continuity of economic relations between Hong Kong and China. That is the view not just of this Government, but of all the Governments of the European Community and of all the substantial trading partners.

Hong Kong

14. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to encourage the transition to democracy in Hong Kong.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I told the House on 5 July, we shall be re-examining current plans for the development of representative government in Hong Kong. As the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs pointed out in its report published on 30 June, the wishes of the Hong Kong people themselves must be crucial to our approach to this question.

Mr. McFall: In the light of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee report on Hong Kong and of the official opposition view that, by 1991, 50 per cent. of the Legislative Council should be elected and that by 1995, 100 per cent. should be elected, what is the view of the Government on these proposals and, more particularly, will they implement them so that, before the handover date of 1997, full democracy is operating in Hong Kong?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We shall, as I have made clear already, review the rate of progress toward representative government in Hong Kong in the light, above all, of evolving opinion in the territory. The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs pointed out—I have already made this point—that the wishes of the Hong Kong people must be crucial to our approach to this question. The last considered opinion expressed in Hong Kong was that expressed unanimously by the Office of the Members of the Executive and Legislative Councils of Hong Kong on 24 May. It is now reconsidering the matter. It is already clear, as I have made plain, that plans for 1991 will certainly need to be looked at again. We shall consider what needs to be done before 1997 once those views have been expressed clearly within Hong Kong.

Mr. David Howell: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that he is absolutely correct that it is the wishes of Hong Kong about the pace of democracy which must prevail, although, as he rightly says, there are signs of increasing strength of feeling about the need to have democracy well entrenched by 1997? Will he try to explain to Opposition Members and to those outside this House, when they talk of economic sanctions and other attempts to break links with China, that 40 per cent. of Hong Kong's manufacturing industry is physically placed up the Pearl river in China? The ideas of Opposition Members would put a dagger at the heart of Hong Kong.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for both his comments. It cannot be stated too often that China is the largest commercial and financial partner of Hong Kong and that Hong Kong is the largest commercial and financial partner of China. It would be absolutely catastrophic to begin to approach this matter by deliberately savaging those crucial and important economic links.

Dr. Bray: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that there is a job to be done by a directly-elected democratic executive and legislature in Hong Kong in securing rights of refuge and settlement of abode—or however he cares to describe it—for larger numbers of people in the world than the Foreign Secretary or any British Government would have the moral authority to secure? Has he therefore made arrangements to receive advice individually from members of LegCo and ExCo, and not solely through the Government?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The members of LegCo and of OmelCo—the Office of the Members of the Executive and Legislative Councils of Hong Kong—are well placed to extend their advice individually as well as collectively. I had the opportunity of meeting them together when I was there and each expressed strong views. I have no doubt that we shall subsequently hear from them individually as well as collectively.

Mr. Kilfedder: Will the Foreign Secretary give an assurance that the people of Hong Kong will be allowed to draft and approve a Bill of Rights and when that has been achieved, will he persuade his Cabinet colleagues to provide a similar Bill of Rights for the people of Northern Ireland?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I would not seek to match my hon. Friend in his willingness to seek to address the questions and aspirations of the people of Northern Ireland. However, he can be sure that we intend to introduce a Bill of Rights at an early stage in Hong Kong. Indeed, the Governor will be making an announcement about that in October.

Totalitarian Regimes

15. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what training in the technical processes of democracy Britain can offer to countries emerging from totalitarian regimes.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): We offer training in the technical processes of democracy through a wide range of visits, seminars, legal exchanges, and media and management training courses.

Mr. Boswell: Does my hon. Friend agree that the cause of democracy is now advancing widely throughout the world, especially in eastern Europe? While I pay tribute to our hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for his offer to Poland—and, I believe, to Hungary—of support of that kind, does my hon. Friend agree that it is entirely appropriate that the Government should add a measure of cash and training resources to complement our skills, strengths of tradition and knowledge in the processes of democracy?

Mr. Eggar: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his recognition of the £5 million know-how fund for Poland. In addition, the Great Britain-Eastern Europe Centre is planning a series of seminars on democracy. We also receive and respond to a wide variety of requests for help in this area from emergent democracies throughout the world.

Mr. Winnick: Can we take it from the Minister's reply that the large majority of the people in South Africa, and people in Chile, Guatemala and other Right-wing dictatorships will also receive all the kinds of assistance that the Minister has just explained, as they move, we hope, from dictatorships to democracy?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman is aware that as part of a long-standing policy, supported by Governments of both parties, we have brought over many of the democratic opposition candidates and that we have assisted with visits by parliamentarians, especially to Chile. That will continue. There is a good case for examining whether there is any more that we can do in that area, right across the board.

Drugs

16. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made on negotiated reciprocal arrangements with other European Community members to combat drugs.

Mr. Eggar: On 26 June my right hon. and learned Friend signed a bilateral agreement with Spain to trace, freeze and confiscate the assets of drug traffickers and combat the misuse of drugs. We are currently in active discussion with four other European Community countries with a view to signing similar agreements.

Mrs. Hicks: In congratulating my right hon. and hon. Friends on the recent agreement that has been signed with Spain, and in view of the fact that this is only the first agreement with one of our partners since the introduction of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, may I ask whether he is convinced that our European partners recognise the urgency of the escalating problem now facing us and that they are ensuring that Latin-American drug traffickers are not using Europe as a distribution centre and as the front door to the United Kingdom?

Mr. Eggar: We must accept the fact that Europe as a whole is being targeted by the cocaine barons and, as part of Europe, we face a considerable threat both from crack and from cocaine. I have no doubt about our Community partners' commitment to fighting the menace from drugs. It is, however, a difficult technical matter to reach agreement with countries that have a different kind of legal system to ours. We are working hard at it, and I am hopeful that we will soon be able to sign further agreements.

Mr. Cryer: Is it true that the number of seizures of drugs at United Kingdom borders by Customs officers exceeds the number of seizures by every other EEC state? If so, will the Minister assure the House that borders will not be dismantled after 1992, but that we will still maintain scrutiny, against, for example, drug merchants and terrorists, to ensure that traffickers are stopped? Otherwise, the Minister could be accused of subordinating the interests of United Kingdom citizens to the interests of the multinationals.

Mr. Eggar: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern. It is, of course, essential that we maintain the ability to impose frontier controls after 1992 for the reason that he has given and for other reasons too.

Community Care

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the Government's proposals for the future organisation and funding of community care. I apologise for the fact that I have a fairly lengthy statement to make, but it is a complex matter which is difficult to abbreviate more than I have.

Community care is a policy to which successive Governments have been committed for almost 30 years. The key aim of the policy is to enable people to live as full and independent a life as is possible for them to do in the community for so long as they wish to do so. For many people, that means providing the services and support that they need to continue to live in reasonable comfort in their own homes for as long as possible. For others, who may have experienced long stays in hospital and have more intensive care needs, it means helping them to re-establish their lives away from large institutional settings. I am sure that the vast majority of people wish to live in or near their own homes until or unless age or disability make that impossible. It is the Government's purpose to help them and the people who care for them to achieve that aim. Success depends crucially on the availability of adequate services in the community.

The background to the developments that I am about to announce is one of tremendous growth in both resources and manpower for community care. To give the House some examples of the progress that has been made between 1979-80 and 1986-87—expenditure by the NHS on the community health services has risen by 40 per cent. in real terms and local government spending on the personal social services has grown by almost 27 per cent. Indeed, that local government figure is almost 39 per cent., if it is brought up to date.

The number of day centre and day hospital places for mentally handicapped people between 1979 and 1987 rose by 10,000. The number of home helps grew by 20 per cent. and the number of day centre places for elderly people by 18 per cent. The number of residential places for mentally ill people rose by more than a half, and places in day centres and day hospitals by a third. Between 1981 and 1986, the number of community psychiatric nurses doubled.

That growth in resources has been taking place alongside a dramatic change in the delivery of care and the movement of people out of hospitals and into community settings. Between 1980 and 1986, the number of children in mental handicap hospitals fell from 2,500 to fewer than 400, and the number of mentally handicapped adults in hospital fell by around 14,000, while the number in local authority, voluntary and private community based homes rose by 11,000. In additional, we have, through the benefit system, put huge additional resources into supporting people in private residential care and nursing homes. The amounts spent on supporting these people have increased from £10 million in 1979 to £878 million in 1988.

None the less, I am sure that we all agree that progress has not been as even or as rapid as we should like. The rapid growth of residential and nursing home care has been unplanned and largely based on the availability of social security benefits. The Government recognised the need to see whether the arrangements for delivering community care could be improved when we askd Sir Roy Griffiths in December 1986 to report on ways by which the better use of public funds for community care might be achieved.

We are indebted to Sir Roy for his report entitled "Community Care: Agenda for Action", which we published in March last year. The report has succeeded in stimulating valuable public debate. More than 280 organisations, professional bodies and members of the public, have sent us their varying views on it, many in support of the recommendations, but some favouring other options. We have taken full account of the wide range of views expressed, and considered a wide variety of options. Our conclusions are as follows.

We accept the distinction Sir Roy Griffiths makes between health and social care. Our proposals do not alter the functions or responsibilities of health services. The community health services will continue to play an essential part in meeting the medical and nursing needs of people outside hospital.

We are proposing to make important changes in the way in which non-health care is provided and, where necessary, funded at public expense. The great bulk of community care will continue, as now, to be provided by family, friends and neighbours. The majority of carers take on those responsibilities willingly, and I admire the dedicated and self-sacrificing way in which so many members of the public take on serious obligations to help care for elderly or disabled relatives and friends. Our proposals are aimed at strengthening support for those many unselfish people who care for people in need.

At present, people who are unable to support themselves and need help with social care can look to two separate sources of statutory help: to social security offices for payments towards the cost of places in residential care and nursing homes; and to local authorities, for home care, day care and residential care services. We accept that these present arrangements are flawed, because they cannot ensure that priority is given towards supporting people at home where that is possible or desirable.

Social security payments for residential and nursing home care are subject to no assessment of individual needs for care. The public agencies have a financial incentive at the moment which no one ever intended to give to them, to rely as much as possible on the availability of social security for residential care. We do not believe that those present arrangements secure the best possible outcomes for people in need, or indeed, the best possible use of taxpayers' money.

We therefore accept Sir Roy's recommendation that those two sources of public funding should be brought together and allocated on the basis of a proper judgment of each individual's needs. By creating this unified source of funding for the full range of social care services, we can ensure that the objective of sustaining people in their own homes wherever possible be given the necessary priority.

We propose to introduce a new funding structure for those seeking help from public funds for the cost of care. In future there should be a single budget to cover the costs of care whether in a person's own home or in a residential or nursing home. This will enable sensible decisions to be taken about the type of care that best meets an individual's needs and provides best use of public money. At the same time we will remove the perverse incentives in the present benefit system by making all claimants eligible to income

support and housing benefit on a similar basis, whether they are living in their own homes or in independent residential or nursing homes.

We have considered carefully which care authority should hold this new budget and take on the responsibility for the assessment of need and provision of care. Local authorities are already responsible for the full range of social care services and have a great deal of expertise in this area. We have concluded that the best way forward will be to build on local authorities' existing responsibilities. We accept Sir Roy Griffiths's proposal that local authorities should assume responsibility for the care element of public support for people in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes, and for making the best use of those funds in relation to an assessment of people's individual needs and wishes. Collaboration between medical, nursing and social services agencies will be essential in assessing individual needs, and in designing suitable arrangements for care. We shall look to local authorities to ensure that suitable multidisciplinary assessment procedures are in place and to health authorities to make their contribution to those procedures.

We attach great importance to securing a smooth transition to this new structure, avoiding uncertainty for people currently living in homes and for their relatives. We therefore propose that the new arrangements for social security benefit entitlement will apply to people not already in residential or nursing home care after the date on which the new arrangements come into force.

Residents of homes who are in receipt of income support when the new system is introduced will therefore retain their entitlement to help through the existing system. People who are self-financing residents of registered homes when the new system is introduced will also be able to apply for income support under the existing arrangements if their funds become exhausted subsequently. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is today announcing further details of these new arrangements.

We accept that further efforts will be needed to improve co-ordination between health and social services in the arrangement and delivery of services to individuals. We believe that the clarification of roles in our proposals will make it easier to achieve this.

The local authorities' responsibilities, in collaboration with others including doctors and other caring professions, will be to assess individuals' needs, design suitable care arrangements, and secure their delivery. It is not necessary for local authorities to provide all this service directly themselves and they should make maximum possible use of the voluntary, not-for-profit and commercial sectors so as to widen individuals' room for choice, increase the flexibility of services and stimulate innovation.

The Government have long urged local authority social services departments to act in an "enabling", and not just a "providing" capacity. Some authorities are already moving in that direction. To minimise disruption and to ensure that local authorities have every incentive to make use of the independent sector and offer people choice, we propose that they should continue to meet the full cost of accommodating people in local authorities' own homes, subject to their existing powers to make charges according to residents' ability to pay. My right hon. Friend is not therefore proposing to change the benefit rules for residents of these homes.

We believe that these new financial arrangements will give local authorities the necessary incentives to develop better services for people at home, and make greater use of independent providers. But it will be important that local authorities should have clear plans for the development of community care services, worked out in collaboration with health authorities and the independent sector. I shall expect all authorities to have such plans, and shall ensure that they are open to inspection by my social services inspectorate. I also propose to take powers to call for reports on local authorities' community care services.

Local authorities will need adequate resources for their new responsibilities. That means that we shall transfer to the local authorities the resources which the Government would otherwise have provided to finance care through social security payments to people in residential and nursing homes. The aggregate amount of transferred resources will allow for the projected growth in the number of people needing support. Resources will be needed by the local authorities in addition to carry out their new tasks of assessing individuals' needs, arranging appropriate care services for people at home, and buying residential and nursing home care.

We are confident that the proposed funding changes, by putting more emphasis on supporting people in their own homes, will provide both more suitable services closer to individuals' wishes and needs, and better value for money from public spending than under the existing arrangements. We shall be discussing the detailed financial implications with local authority representatives. The necessary decisions on the resources to be transferred will be taken in the public expenditure survey next year.

I have summarised our conclusions on the main proposals in Sir Roy Griffiths's report. They represent a major challenge for local authorities and social services departments. There are a number of associated issues on which the House will also expect me to make the Government's position clear.

First, we have been especially concerned to ensure that care for severely mentally ill people is properly managed. Here, as in other areas, we have concluded that the right course is to ensure that the existing responsibilities are discharged effectively. On the health side, I will ensure that discharges of seriously mentally ill people from hospital will take place only when adequate medical and social care is available for them outside hospital. More details of the initiatives we are taking here will be announced shortly. On the social care side, we have decided to create a new specific grant directed at encouraging local authorities to make their necessary contribution to services, in line with health authority plans and objectives. To achieve that, we have decided that the grant should be payable by health authorities, acting as my agents, on the basis of plans and targets put to them by the relevant local authorities. The details of this proposal will be worked out in discussion with health and local authority representatives.

Secondly, both Sir Roy Griffiths and Lady Wagner made recommendations about the registration and inspection of residential care and nursing homes. Local authorities will be asked to establish inspection and registration units, at arm's length from the management of their own services, which should be responsible for checking on standards in their own homes, and to involve independent outsiders in these arrangements. We have concluded that, for the present, existing statutory functions should remain unaltered.

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

Thirdly, we would expect general practitioners to ensure that social services departments are aware of their patients' needs for social care as recommended by Sir Roy Griffiths in his report.

I have outlined our conclusions on the main issues. I am grateful to the House for its patience in sitting through a long and complicated statement. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales are today announcing separately our conclusions of particular relevance to them. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will be doing the same early next week. We propose to spell out our proposals in more detail in a White Paper that we aim to publish in the autumn. It will be necessary to ensure that the necessary legislative framework is in place before implementation, which we propose should be in 1991.

Our proposals bring the policy of community care up to date, and will improve the way in which it is put into practice on the ground. Community care is no longer primarily about providing the alternative to long-stay hospital care. The vast majority of people needing care now have never been, nor expect to be, in such institutions. The policy aim now is to strike the right balance between home and day care on the one hand, and residential and nursing home care on the other, while reserving hospital care for those whose needs truly cannot be met elsewhere. The changes we propose will for the first time ensure that all public moneys are devoted to the primary objective of supporting people at home wherever possible. They provide a solid basis for the future, and are founded upon the principles of preserving individual independence and freedom of choice and of providing services in a sensitive and personal way.

I believe that they deserve whole-hearted support, and commend them to the House.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I begin with the two points in his statement on which we can unreservedly congratulate the Secretary of State. First, we welcome the fact that he has finally got round to saying anything about the Griffiths report. Will he confirm that Ministers have taken longer to think about their response to this report than Sir Roy took to write it? Even after all that time, the Secretary of State still has to ask the House to wait another four months for a White Paper to explain the meaning of today's statement.

Secondly, I congratulate the Secretary of State on persuading the Prime Minister that providing community care means swallowing her distaste for local government. This is a major achievement, which deserves full recognition. We welcome the Secretary of State's acceptance of Griffiths's central conclusion that the lead agency in community care must be the local authority, which belongs and is accountable to the community.

Why, then, has the right hon. and learned Gentleman rejected Griffiths's recommendation that residents of local authority homes should be entitled to the same financial support from central Government as residents in private homes? If he really believes that elderly people should be given the widest possible choice, why has he decided to deny them income support and housing benefit only if they choose a council home? Surely even the Secretary of State will admit that, rather than widening choice, that narrows it, and does so simply to fit the Government's prejudice against local authorities.

Since the statement calls for greater co-ordination and collaboration between health authorities and local authorities, could the Secretary of State enlighten the House as to how that co-ordination and collaboration will be helped by his intention to boot council representatives off every health authority?

The Secretary of State was good enough to recognise that most care in the community will continue to be provided by family and friends. Does he not mean by that the nearest available female relative, often exhausted by providing constant nursing, with no training, with no break and usually with no help? The Secretary of State informed the House that he admires them. If he really admires them, why does the statement contain no mention of respite care to give them a break, or a single mention of care attendents to give them a night off? If he really admires them, why have the Government proposed to slap on an extra poll tax charge for taking in granny? If he really admires them, why does he not bring back national guidelines for home helps? What has he to say to the half-dozen councils—all Conservative—whose provision of home helps is half the national average? Is that the standard of community care that is acceptable to the Conservative party?

The Secretary of State said that services should be sensitive to the needs and wishes of users. What will he do to encourage that? Will he begin by telling his colleagues on Bradford council not to proceed next Wednesday with the sale of a dozen old folks' homes without consulting the residents? Is that the sensitivity to the wishes of users that is acceptable to the Conservative party?

Now that we have persuaded the right hon. and learned Gentleman to use the words "community care", could I tempt him to use the words "disabled persons Act"? Why did he not take this opportunity to implement section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, which would have given patients discharged from mental health hospitals the right to an assessment of their needs? Is he aware that last week was the third anniversary of Royal Assent to that Act? How can he expect the House to believe in the Government's commitment to community care when they have yet to implement half that Act?

The biggest omission from the right hon. and learned Gentleman's statement was money. He knows that Sir Roy Griffiths recommended an annual grant for each local authority to fund its community care programme. Would the right hon. and learned Gentleman like to rummage through his notes in case he left out the passage announcing such a grant? Does he not appreciate that, without resources, the plans and the reports that he has announced today are mere window-dressing? Why does he not at least accept that local authorities should have the property fortunes that health authorities are making from the sale of mental hospitals? Should not the first charge on that money be the capital costs of new homes to house the patients put out so that the hospitals could be closed?

The right hon. and learned Gentleman began with a description of the Government's record on community care that oozed complacency from every sentence. It ignored the fact that the number of places at day centres for the elderly has fallen per thousand of the elderly population. It ignored the fact that the numbers

discharged from mental health hospitals are three times the growth in the number of day centre places. Those outside this place will ask how that description could be made by anyone who has noticed the dramatic growth in the number of mental health patients now living in hostels for the homeless, or the steady rise in the number of them in remand centres, or even the increase in the number sleeping rough behind the right hon. and learned Gentleman's ministerial office.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman ended his statement by informing the House that his proposals will not be in place for another two years. Our pledge to those in need of community care is that, by then, no longer will he and his Government be in power.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) began by talking about the time that it has taken to produce our response. I cannot win on timing. For anything of which he disapproves, he accuses me of being too fast and a bull at a gate; for anything of which he approves—despite his attempts to find disagreement—he accuses me of taking too long. It is easy for him; he has only to see the words "local government" in a White Paper to ring NALGO—when it is not on strike—and ask what to say—[AN HON. MEMBER: "That is a poor joke."] It is a very good joke. The hon. Gentleman obviously takes footnotes from NUPE, as was shown by his questions.

The truth is that the hon. Gentleman agrees with my proposals. We have taken considerable care, first in deciding exactly how to sharpen the responsibilities of local authorities; secondly, how to transfer resources to them to enable them to do so; and thirdly, how to ensure that we have some assurances that they will live up to those responsibilities and properly discharge their role. The hon. Gentleman knows that he approves of that policy.

The hon. Gentleman apparently dislikes the fact that we are not allowing a large increase in local authority provision of council homes. Indeed, we are not proposing any change to the existing arrangements for residents of local authority homes, and there is no case to do so. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that there is a need to change the arrangements artificially to stimulate a sudden upsurge in local authority provision, my answer is that my statement is a challenge to local government and gives it important new responsibilities. It probably would not be right for most councils to combine with that a growth in the management role of the day-to-day running of more and more homes. We have struck the right pattern, because more and more local authorities think of themselves as enablers, looking to other people to deliver the care.

The hon. Gentleman made some curious remarks about my reference to relatives and friends. He rightly said that many of them are female members of the family looking after their relatives. The whole point of my statement is that we are enabling local authorities to give more support to those people. The hon. Gentleman gave a list of provisions that they are likely to need, including respite care and care attendants. The whole point of transferring resources and of clarifying responsibilities is to make available the very kind of support that local authorities should be enabled to provide in the light of our policy. The hon. Gentleman's snide remarks were unintelligible to me. I shall not get into bashing Bradford council, which the hon. Gentleman also irrelevantly introduced into his arguments. New control in Bradford is bringing great improvements to that authority and to its capacity to deliver enhanced care to the city's residents.

Section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 is overtaken by my remarks today. Section 7 divides responsibility for mentally ill people between those who have been in hospital for six months or more and those who have not —and there is no logical basis for that arrangement. Of course I agree that care in the community policy for the mentally ill needs to be improved, and our proposal will ensure that pump-priming resources will be available to local authorities.

The key to those resources will be held by health authorities, which, as my agents, will release money when they are satisfied that the right local provisions are in place. That should reduce the number of patients who are rightly released from hospital into better provision, but who then leave that accommodation or become lost, are not followed up, and wind up in the unfortunate circumstances that the hon. Gentleman described.

As to money and resources, we are following Sir Roy Griffiths's recommendation to transfer resources and the care element of social security to local authority budgets —making allowance, as we will have to do, for anticipated growth and the new duties of local authorities. We have not followed Sir Roy's recommendation for a specific grant. The transfer of resources will take place, but the specific grant was a control mechanism suggested by Sir Roy. For my central Government Department to seek to use a specific grant to control directly the community care policies of all local authorities throughout the country would not be the right way of enabling those authorities to discharge their responsibilities.

That is why I prefer the route of community care programmes drawn up together with health authorities and voluntary bodies, of giving powers to my social services inspectorate, and of having the power to call for reports and to intervene when an individual authority poses a problem. The transfer of resources is in line with Sir Roy's recommendation. That transfer and the new responsibilities begin a new era in community care. It has always been right to pursue the policy of keeping people in their own homes for as long as they wish to remain there, and the implementation of that policy will now be greatly improved.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the House is grateful to him for acknowledging the role of private carers in looking after the elderly and disabled in our midst? Is he aware also that if those carers decided to take industrial action, the statutory services could not cope? As my right hon. and learned Friend acknowledges the important role of the private carer, will he explain how he intends to "strengthen support" for the private carer? The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) made a number of points that pertained directly to that aspect. Do the Government intend to increase the invalid care allowance, which would be of enormous help to people who give up work to look after a person who is insufficiently handicapped to be eligible for a disabled attendance allowance? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there are more people out there needing help than have been acknowledged until now?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend's final point, and I think that it is acknowledged now that the vast majority of care of the people in question is provided by dedicated friends and relatives. We are trying to tackle the situation of when it becomes increasingly difficult or near impossible for the family to cope. At present, they find it much easier to obtain social security, to enable them to move the relative into a nursing home, than to secure the additional support that might help them to keep that relative at home much longer. I refer to respite care, domestic help and the other provisions that local authorities should be enabled to provide.

The money for that is readily available, but is currently diverting people into residential care when perhaps that is not the best choice. Those resources will be placed in the hands of local authorities, who will use a lot of it to back up the carers and give the support that they require to carry on with their task—which they would do willingly, with the support of the statutory authorities.

There is no change in the benefit arrangement for carers. That matter is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security and it is not dealt with in the Griffiths report. However, there have been some advances. There has been a huge growth in the number of people receiving invalid care allowance since it was extended to married women, increasing elevenfold after the law was changed three years ago.

We are trying all the time to find other ways of helping carers, and we are encouraging the demonstration projects that are going on all over the country to show local authorities what is best practice in the provison of support.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): We welcome the statement, and, indeed, the fact that social services departments will now be the lead authority: we have asked for that for a long time in our discussions with Sir Roy Griffiths.

Does the Secretary of State accept, however, that the GPs now have a considerable role to play, and that the GP lists should be smaller? Does he agree that training is needed for social services departments? They have called for it through their directors, and it will certainly be an important aspect of the arrangements.

Hon. Members have already mentioned the role of carers. Can the Secretary of State specify one or two measures to help them? I am connected with the Association of Carers, which will not be too sure, from a reading of the statement, what is to happen. Perhaps the Secretary of State for Social Services could enlighten us.

It appears that there will be rather a dearth of housing for those who are sent out—I will not say "thrown out" —of institutions. Clearly local authorities must play a major role. Will the Secretary of State direct in any way that they should receive more finance for the purpose?

Mr. Clarke: A high proportion of referrals to social services departments—of people in need of community care—come from general practitioners at present, and I accept that GPs have an extremely important role to play. They will be able to perform that role if they take advantage of one of the elements in the new contract: we shall pay them a much higher fee if they carry out an annual social assessment of all their patients over the age of 75.

I agree that small lists will help GPs to carry out their new duties. None of my proposals will increase the average size of lists; they have been getting smaller ever since the Government came to office, and I confidently expect them to continue to do so.

I agree entirely that we must continue to strengthen training of social workers and local authority employees. Specific grants are already available—for example, to increase the amount of training for social workers caring for the elderly.

I gave some examples to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) a moment ago of the kind of assistance that carers can expect from local authorities, which are being given their new responsibility in the transfer of resources precisely so that they can step in and help people to obtain the support that they require to live in or near their homes.

I note what the hon. Gentleman said about housing, but I honestly do not think that housing finance is remotely related to what I am talking about today, and it is not a matter on which I can announce any new policy.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I welcome what my right hon. and learned Friend has said about the improvement in the arrangements for the discharge of mental patients, whose plight has been worrying many Conservative Members.

May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to consider two factors that make it very much more difficult for private residential homes to fulfil their important task? First, patients in such homes are not eligible for ordinary NHS ancillary treatment: that is a serious problem. Secondly, payment to such people to meet their bills is all too often not passed on to the managers of the homes, who are experiencing severe losses.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said about the worrying problem of mentally ill patients, who nowadays are increasingly treated and cared for outside rather than inside hospitals. As I have said, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health will be making a further statement in the form of a written answer tomorrow, setting out more details of our NHS policy towards such patients. Lest anyone should speculate further along the lines of press reports, let me add that that will not include a moratorium on the discharge of patients from hospitals, or anything of that nature. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] Well, some may want it. It will strengthen the policy of care in the community for those who ought to be cared for in the community and will ensure that the policy works. I am afraid I have forgotten my hon. Friend's other point.

Dame Jill Knight: NHS ancillary medical treatment for patients in private residential homes.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. In my experience, people who are living in private residential and nursing homes are not deprived of all rights to NHS ancillary care, but I agree that the practice varies widely from place to place. If I may, I shall either write to my hon. Friend or will answer a parliamentary question, if she cares to table one, setting out the basis on which those who live in private homes are entitled to NHS treatment, thus aligning them with other citizens. It is a matter that often gives rise to local worries.

As for my hon. Friend's point about social security, various difficulties can arise when people get social security payments to pay for their stay in a nursing home, including

the fact—particularly when they are first admitted—that large sums of money can sometimes be handed over to someone to pay for the treatment, and owners sometimes say that it does not reach them. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is aware of that. He will have heard my hon. Friend's points, as he is in his place. I know that he is considering the matter and that he will keep it actively under review.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement, but does he not agree that what he has said this afternoon could mean everything or nothing, depending on the level of funding? As for his most welcome statement that people should remain in their own homes or in their children's homes, if that is at all possible, what is the projected increase in expenditure from the total budget which would ensure that that objective is kept to over the next five years? To take him back to the important point that has just been made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), will he assure the House that from now on no one will be expelled from a long-stay mental hospital, only to find himself a dosser?

Mr. Clarke: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, decisions on resources can only be made in the public expenditure round next year. [AN HON. MEMBER: "It may not be forthcoming."] No. Most Departments of State and the Treasury are concerned about the public expenditure round this year. There is no point in expecting us to come to final decisions on a part of the public expenditure round for 1991 at this stage. However, the question of resources is important, so that everyone can plan. What my statement contained was a very clear, explicit statement binding the Government to the principles that we shall adopt in working out the right transfer of resources. When that transfer of resources takes place, the final figure will emerge in the public expenditure round next year.

I entirely share the hon. Gentleman's desire that no mentally ill patient should be discharged from hospital and touch is then lost with that patient, or care breaks down, so that he or she winds up in undesirable circumstances. Therefore I intend to ensure that National Health Service hospitals do not discharge patients until they are satisfied that proper arrangements have been made.

Mr. Frank Field: What is the Department going to do?

Mr. Clarke: It would not be realistic for every patient's case to be referred to the Department of Health so that the Department of Health can be satisfied. The practice has much improved, although there are places where it does not work now. In the past, there were some dreadfully bad examples of failure. Hospitals are no longer pushing people out, knowing that they will get into difficulties. The difficulty is that they were pushed out into what appeared to be adequate facilities. Then they left, went away and touch was lost with them.

We are ensuring that responsibility is clearly placed on the local authority, but a specific grant will be available which will be released by the health authority when it sees that local authority plans are there to keep in touch with patients and to provide them with the social care that they need. I very much share the desire that all of us have that there should be a big reduction in the number of incidents whereby mentally ill people fall into dreadful and destitute circumstances.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that the National Health Service will continue to have responsibility not only for the treatment of the mentally ill, the mentally handicapped and the elderly, but also for the care of the mentally ill? How can he give the House an assurance that the social services of this country are competent or qualified to deal with the problems relating to the mentally ill?

Can my right hon. and learned Friend give the House an assurance that in his view there is a continuing need for long-stay hospital care for the mentally ill, particularly those suffering from schizophrenia? Despite what he said in his statement this afternoon, how will he ensure that mentally ill people will not end up in prison—as was discovered in an inquiry carried out by the Social Services Select Committee—in doss houses, in totally inadequate accommodation, on park benches and under the archways of such places as Waterloo station? Will he ensure that health authorities do not concern themselves more with the realisation of assets than with the care of people who require their help?

Mr. Clarke: I am entirely satisfied, in the light of my experience, that health authorities are concerned with the care of mentally ill patients in their charge and not with asset management, as my hon. Friend implied. Of course that must continue. Nothing that I have said today in any way reduces the responsibility of the National Health Service for hospital services for the mentally ill and the community care services, which have been so greatly expanded in recent years by community care units. The number of psychiatric nurses has doubled in five years in the 1980s and their number needs to increase further. Of course I accept the need for long-stay care in hospital, as that will always be required for those who suffer from acute illness or bouts of acute illness. However, the balance of provision between hospital care and community care is greatly changed. It has been changing for 20 years and it will continue to change. We are concentrating on ensuring the success of community care for those who ought not to be treated in hospital.

We have to avoid the scandals that my hon. Friend has described. I wish that some of the television exposés of those scandals were accompanied by exposés of some of the scandals that used to exist in the long-stay mental institutions which we have closed, which were nightmarish institutions. We do not wish to go back to them. We now have the opportunity to link local authorities with health authorities, giving the health authorities the key to unlock the money for the specific grant that will pump-prime new and improved provision of social care for patients for whom the Health Service is trying to provide medical care in the community.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): How does the Secretary of State square what he said about appropriate care for the mentally ill with the closure this Friday of a 24-bed hospital ward for the mentally ill in south Manchester, which, in the words of their consultant, means that his patients will have to wander the streets with nothing to do and nowhere to go? Will he stop that closure? Moreover, how does he reconcile what he said with the insistence by local authority leaders of all political persuasions that, due to lack of resources, they can no

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longer meet their legal duties under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 which, as he knows, is all about community care?

Mr. Clarke: I know that South Manchester district health authority is the centre of enormous controversy about its services and their provision. It is financed on the same basis as any other health authority. If it wishes to make a closure that is contested it is referred to us and is approved by a Minister only if we are satisfied that there is a good health care case for doing so. We should leave South Manchester district health authority to discharge its responsibilities in the way it judges best. Half the Members of Parliament representing Manchester regard everything there as a political decision, but we are satisfied to approach them as health care decisions. I am quite satisfied that South Manchester district health authority is responsible for arranging its own services. If there is a contested closure, we shall consider it in the usual way.

Local authorities have had an enormous increase in resources—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where?"]—on personal social services. Local authority spending on personal social services has gone up by almost 39 per cent. above inflation in the lifetime of this Government. The last time that I was in Stockport, which is near Manchester, I was shown a letter by the director of social services explaining that he could not care for a patient because he needed another £1,500 million to bring his services up to the standard required. Frankly, many local authorities can discharge their responsibilities on present resources, continue to improve them and will look upon today's statement as a great challenge to enable them to improve them further.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his long-awaited statement, which brings together a complex network of community care services. Given the uneven level of provision of personal social services and properly managed residential care homes by certain local authorities, will my right hon. and learned Friend in implementing his proposals take careful account of the need to stablish an effective national monitoring mechanism? In that way, the funds, which will undoubtedly continue to increase, will be properly used and the best national standards obtained throughout the country.

Mr. Clarke: I endorse the excellent objectives that my hon. Friend sets for us in monitoring local authority performance. As I said, all local authorities will have to produce community care plans in collaboration with health authorities and local voluntary bodies. We will, of course, consider those plans.

We have not gone down the specific grant route of trying to control all the plans, but are very much using the inspectorate route. My social services inspectorate will have an increased ability to step in and inquire into the delivery of services. I shall have increased powers to order reports and inquiries. Our inspectorate is producing advice on the management of local authority homes, which should give a clear guide to those local authorities that are not achieving adequate standards. This should ensure that, if they follow that guide, the standards of most will be brought nearer the standards of the best.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I deplore the fact that there has been no separate statement for Scotland and that Scottish Members must await a written reply to a planted question on today's Order Paper.

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman explain why he has ignored Sir Roy Griffiths's recommendation that the public finance of residential home care should be the same whether it is in the public or the private sector? Does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that, by announcing his intention to discriminate against the financing of local authority homes, he throws into utter confusion the planned provision of care in many areas such as Dundee, where a new major residential home is being built?

Mr. Clarke: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has been involved in the production of the Government policy that I announced today. It is entirely proper for him to produce a written statement setting out particular Scottish aspects of the policy, just as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is producing a written statement on the social security implications.

The Gentleman's second point shows that he has misunderstood what I said. There is no change in what I am proposing for the financing of residents of local authority homes. If anything, the discrimination against them is greater under the system that we are replacing. At present, there is an incentive to put people in private residential homes instead of assessing the possibilities of the local authority making other provisions for them. Local authorities will find that, if there is any discrimination in the provision, it will be lessened by my proposals, not increased.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for his statement. As a former chairman of social services and of a health authority, I know only too well the gaps and overlaps that exist. Clarification of responsibility will be welcome to all those who have followed community care matters for a long time.

What will happen to the funds that have been released by health authorities when people have been discharged from long-stay hospitals and that form a kind of dowry to those who now look after them? What will happen to the joint funding money that has been passed from the Health Service to social services as an enabling fund? What plans does my right hon. and learned Friend have for increasing the level of day activity for those who have been discharged from long-stay hospitals where day activity has been provided on site?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's opening remarks. He has considerable expertise which is relevant to both sides of the local authority and health authority fence. Joint funding will continue. We are considering whether we can improve its effectiveness and the way in which it is applied and used. The White Paper that we will publish in the autumn will provide more details.

The amount of day activity is increasing. The provision of an adequate level of day activity for mentally ill people is one of those matters that should definitely be addressed in the community care plan, when it is produced by local authorities in collaboration with health authorities. In future, it should be much easier not only to carry on increasing the level of day activity but to ensure that,

between them, the authorities know exactly what is required, so that plans are drawn up and they know where day activity is provided.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Secretary of State has touched briefly on training. Does he accept that if we are to marry the assessment of need with the provision of service, there will be a clear requirement for a vast number of additional trained, qualified and professional social workers in field work and day care? Has he made any assessment of a budget for the provision of additional training for such people? Does he intend, unlike his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, to ensure that people who suffer from degenerative mental illnesses, such as Alzheimer's disease, will be exempt from the community charge, which has placed an added burden on those who undertake care in the community at this stage?

Mr. Clarke: Social services is a labour-intensive activity, so the continued growth in the provision of personal social services is bound to lead to a growth in the number of staff employed. However, I am not setting a target, and we should not look for growth in the administrative staff as opposed to those delivering care. I recognise the need for training, and we already have some specific grants designed to encourage an increased level of training in care for the elderly. We shall continue to look at the case for any new specific grant, if that is required. I am sure that one of the first actions of local authorities with the new resources transferred to them from the Department of Social Security will be to consider how they will now be able to finance training to bring their staff to the required level of skill.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the frail, the elderly and the most vulnerable will welcome his statement? For the first time, they will have clear guidance on health care packages, backed with cash. However, will he be vigilant in ensuring that local authorities, which will be vested with vast resources, spend those resources specifically on community care and that the resources are not abused?

Mr. Clarke: I welcome my hon. Friend's remarks about the frail, the elderly and the vulnerable, who are meant to be the point of the policy and who will be the beneficiaries of it. I am glad that my hon. Friend has concentrated on that, rather than on the interests of particular groups inside the local authority world, as some Opposition Members appear to be doing. It is important that we stimulate a high level of performance by local authorities. They now have a great opportunity and it is up to them to deliver a good standard of care. I have therefore already stressed the drawing up of the new plans, the involvement of health authorities in them, and the role I expect my social services inspectorate to play. It will be necessary to ensure that some local authorities raise their present standards and use the new resources to catch up with the best practice elsewhere.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaeunau Gwent): As it is almost impossible to exaggerate the agonies and anxieties of individual families and the individuals concerned with this question, and as those anxieties are bound to be intensified in a period of transition, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell us whether he has had any consultation with the people who work in the service, including the Royal College of Nursing? When I asked the right hon. and learned Gentleman a similar question about his general health care plans, he passed it away with a sneer, but he should have learnt better by now. Should he not consult the people who do fine work in this respect, even finer than in the rest of the service, if that is possible?

In the transitional period and even over a longer period, will the Secretary of State and his Department retain, in one form or another, control over the reassessments that will take place of when people will be discharged into the community generally? The assurance for the whole system is bound to depend on those reassessments. The right hon. and learned Gentleman must do his best to give firm guarantees to the people concerned.

Mr. Clarke: On consultation, Sir Roy Griffiths and his team went round all those concerned with the subject in the first place before introducing their report. On production of the report, all those concerned made representations in the light of it. We received over 200. The Royal College of Nursing, which did not agree with all Sir Roy's recommendations, was one body which put representations to us, and we considered them carefully.

I agree entirely with the right hon. Gentleman that nothing worries a family more than the whole process of seeing an elderly relative reach the stage where some care will be required to ensure that he or she can cope and the transition period may be worrying. That is why I emphasise that all those who are in private residential homes and nursing homes now, and all those who will be there in 1991 when the new system starts, can rest assured that their present entitlement to social security and their resort to the social security system will continue unchanged. We do not want to start reopening the provision for all those who are now resident in private nursing homes.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the discharge of mental patients. I do not think that this was what the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) had in mind but, in case it was, I said that we could not take responsibility for each patient. Plainly, we accept responsibility for monitoring the performance of health authorities and ensuring that they carry out the clear policy of the Government and the National Health Service that mentally ill patients should not be discharged from hospital unless satisfactory arrangements for their care await them in the community. Through our accountability procedures, we shall seek to ensure that all health authorities live up to that.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there will be a widespread welcome for the consultations which preceded and are to follow today's statement? Is he also aware that we welcome the emphasis on public moneys devoted to such purposes being concentrated wherever possible on keeping people at home and in the community? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware, however, that Tone Vale mental hospital is in my constituency, and staff and the families of patients are anxious that patients should not be discharged until proper mental care and social support is available?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As he said, consultation will continue after today. There will be a White Paper in the autumn, but before we produce it we must start discussions with the local authorities and with health authorities about how we should prepare for the

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new policy in 1991. That will include discussions of the resource implications, about which Opposition Members have asked.

I know of my hon. Friend's interest in the patients in the mental hospital in his constituency and I share his desire, and that of the staff, to ensure that no patients are discharged unless good-quality community care is available for them. The mental hospital in my constituency was closed about six months ago and I believe that in that case, over a long period, the transition was achieved successfully. The policy has certainly been implemented successfully in other parts of the county, although I quite understand how annoyed and distressed people become when the policy falls down in practice, as it has in the past.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the Secretary of State accept that, if people welcome the general direction that he is taking towards more community care, it will be to the extent that community care is right for the individual and not because it is a cut-price option? Does he accept that, in providing the right domiciliary services to enable people to stay in the community, we shall inevitably incur expenditure on services such as paramedical services —physiotherapy and so on? Does he realise that his statement cannot mean anything unless it is accompanied by additional resources to make it meaningful to those dependent on it?

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman also clarify the position on the Disabled Persons (Services Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, in view of the doubts arising about section 7 from his earlier comments? Does he not realise that that Act provides a specific mechanism for assessing people's needs before they return to the community—an essential feature of any structure such as this? If the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not know the answer to that question now, can he arrange for a statement to be made on the 1986 Act as soon as possible?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's first two assertions. Community care is not a cut-price alternative to institutional care and it is not being promoted as a means of cutting expenditure. We foresee greater expenditure as demand increases, with the changed age profile of the country. As I have already said, expenditure on Health Service community care has increased by more than 40 per cent. during the Government's term of office, and expenditure on local government personal social services has increased by almost 39 per cent. My statement made clear our views about resources for the future. All that we can do at this stage in preparation for 1991 is to say that the final decisions must be made in the public expenditure round.

Now I have forgotten the hon. Gentleman's last point.

Mr. Wigley: The 1986 Act.

Mr. Clarke: Our policy on that Act has not changed. We made it clear at the time that, although the Act had been passed by the House, we could not commit ourselves to providing resources for it. We are not bound by that Act in tackling community care. I do not find section 7 very attractive. It tries to lay down a legalistic basis on which to assess individual patients and divides the mentally ill into categories, setting out one method for dealing with those who have been in hospital for more than six months and another for dealing with those who have been in hospital for less than six months. As the new policies unfold, we shall all have the opportunity, no doubt, to re-examine the continued relevance of section 7.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's statement, but I am slightly disturbed by his last answer. Does he accept that an integral part of care in the community must be efficacy, assessment, rights of appeal and pre-discharge planning? Does he agree that the 1986 Act contains the necessary statutory requirements for all those facilities to be provided? I therefore plead that he again looks at sections 1, 2, 3 and 7 of the Act to ensure that the patients' interests are properly met.

Mr. Clarke: As I said, I was not proposing to announce a change of policy on the 1986 Act. I had better repeat that I do not believe that I have. The Act was passed by the House, and the Government made their attitude to it quite clear then. What we have announced today is an improvement of policy. It opens the possibility of more service of the kind that my hon. Friend, who always closely follows matters concerning disabled people, was quite rightly urging. We have not changed the policy. We do not think that, on this occasion, it is right to use the 1986 Act to implement any part of what we are doing today.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): The free-market experiment in private care may have done a great deal to revive the fortunes of rundown seaside boarding houses and dilapidated Victorian institutions, but it has set back the development of genuine community care for generations. I am concerned that the public perception of care has been affected by the fact that people now believe that an institution is the only answer to elderly people's needs, the consequence being many elderly people in institutional care when they do not need to be.

In proposing to leave determination of provision largely to the private market, what guarantee have we that the market will help to develop alternatives to institutional care? In changing the role of local authorities to that of enablers rather than providers, what will a local authority's role be when it is asked to provide part III accommodation for people who are turfed out of the private sector and whom it does not want to know, and it no longer has that part III accommodation available?

Mr. Clarke: If I can disentangle what the hon. Gentleman said from the political jargon in which he wrapped it up, there is not a great deal between us. I agree that there should be no prejudgment in favour of residential institutional care vis-a-vis community care. We want someone to make a sensible assessment of what best suits an individual, taking account of that person's own wishes and desires. That is the key role that local authorities should play. There should not be any prejudgment that a local authority should provide it all. It is for a local authority to decide how best it can make suitable provision for individual people. I do not think that there is much difference in policy. I always find it difficult when the hon. Gentleman insists on seeing everything in terms of free-market this or local authority that. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Hinchliffe: The Secretary of State has some room to talk.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman attended, uninvited, my meeting in Leeds the other day on the National Health Service review. I hope that he found it interesting. When he realised that it was a serious discussion of how we were to implement it, he promptly left. No doubt he was expecting to listen to a debate about free-market versus Socialist solutions. He knows perfectly well that we are talking here about the sensitive delivery of care to individual people in the way that best suits their needs. That is what we want local authorities to do.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Bearing in mind that some appalling local authorities despise private enterprise and involvement in this matter, when drawing up the legislation, will my right hon. and learned Friend take care to ensure that, in exceptional circumstances, he has power to step in to ensure that services are provided properly if a local authority abysmally fails, as some hon. Members may expect them to do?

Mr. Clarke: As I have said, I agree that this is important. I am proposing to take additional powers to ensure that I can inspect and call for reports on the way in which local authorities are carrying out their responsibilities. When drafting legislation, I will certainly consider what my hon. Friend says about the need for possible reserve powers to step in and provide services, although the experience of central Government in trying to step in and provide services when local authorities completely fail is not very happy. I hope that we are making them draw up care plans alongside the other agencies that are responsible—health authorities and voluntary bodies—and then giving my inspectorate the right to get in in time and give warning that they seem to be falling down on the job. The vast majority of local authorities will improve on the very good job that they are doing now in the light of the new policy, and we will take some new powers to ensure that we can chase the few that lag rather badly behind.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): The Royal College of Nursing has made it clear that, according to its calculations, the number of totally dependent elderly people will increase by 100,000 by the year 2000. At present, more than one in five people over the age of 75 suffer from dementia and need round-the-clock care, and there is no evidence that this ratio will decrease. I am therefore interested to know what increased levels of funding the Secretary of State expects to be made available to increase the number of residential places available for a clearly defined and growing need.

Mr. Clarke: I agree entirely with the hon. Lady's analysis of the growing demand and the growing need. The continued expansion of psycho-geriatric services will be very important, exactly as she described. Today, we are dealing with a policy which will increase local authorities' ability to provide social services support to those people and to their friends who look after them in the community, or to pay for them to go into private residential or nursing homes, as many will, because that is the best way in which to care for them.

Other aspects of the policy need to be looked at, however. I quite agree that, when developing community health services within the National Health Service, we must give ever-increasing priority to psycho-geriatric services. We will have a huge rise in the number of elderly people who suffer from Alzheimer's disease and other psycho-geriatric disorders.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is clear that it will not be possible to call every hon. Member who wishes to ask the Secretary of State a question. I shall therefore call four from each side, and then we must move on.

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that there will be widespread support for his statement today, particularly that part of it which relates to the mentally ill? Will he repeat the assurance that no mentally ill patients will be discharged into the community unless resources for their care are made available?

Mr. Clarke: I will certainly repeat it. I note again my right hon. Friend's interest in this matter, which I suspect is connected with his concern for the mental hospitals near his constituency. I think that the policy has always been correct in principle, but its implementation in practice has often left a great deal to be desired. Although things are improving, we now have to ensure that patients are not discharged unless there is adequate provision, and arrangements are improved to keep in touch with them once they are discharged.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Does the Secretary of State accept that, in two respects, he has left some confusion about the care of the mentally ill? First, he referred to giving money to allow local authorities to start pump-priming projects. Such projects start things off and someone else picks up the funding later. Who will pick up the funding later?

Secondly, it will be for the hospital boards to give a grant to local authorities when they are satisifed that a patient will be well looked after. What successful precedents have there been for one authority giving money to the control of another, thus losing control over the budget? That has been one of the problems with the current policy. Will the Secretary of State comment?

Mr. Clarke: I will attempt to clarify that. I am sorry if I have confused. I used the expression, "pump-priming" because we are talking about specific grants to be used for new services. Local authorities already provide some community care services for mentally ill people, although it is only about 1·5 per cent. of total social services expenditure. I used that phrase to make it clear that we are talking about a specific grant to encourage new provisions.

I also used the word "pump-priming" to make it clear that it would not be the only source of finance for new services. We want local authorities to carry on expanding of their own volition. There are plenty of precedents for specific grants, and this one will mean that the money is made available only to provide community care for mentally ill people—it is ring-fenced and can be used only for that purpose.

There is no exact precedent for the health authority acting as my agent for the release of that money in response to bids. However, I see no difficulty in that arrangement. It will ensure proper collaboration between the health authority and the local authority and will ensure

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that the local authority's provision matches the health authority's expectations of needs for service arising from, for example, the pending closure of a hospital.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there was a typical misuse of statistics when the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) claimed that the statistics on home helps show that care is failing, when many local authorities such as mine are pioneering new services that are much better targeted than the old home help service? Does he further agree that the central pivot of the new process is the assessment procedure and that that entails collaboration between the Health Service and social service departments, which will be professionally touchy and difficult to achieve? Will he give an undertaking that, over the next two years, training will be made available for both sides involved in that difficult procedure, because otherwise I suspect that it will run into great difficulties?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend's first point. The Opposition will never accept the inescapable fact that the background to this is 10 years of growth of expenditure and, even more importantly, of growth of the service for all the people we are talking about. At the moment, there is a growth of successful provision in most local authorities.

I also agree that collaboration between the health authorities and the local authorities is a key feature. We have introduced two new ways of encouraging that directly. The first is that those authorities will have to work together to draw up the community care plans. The second is that a specific grant will be released by the health authority when the local authority plans and the health authority plans for mentally ill people have been put in line.

We are now starting a process of discussions with local authorities and health authorities about the implementation of the policy. I am not sure that it requires the training of the senior staff concerned, but my Department's efforts will be bent to ensuring that, as they both prepare for the new policy, we do everything we can to encourage them to get together at local level in every case, involving the county councils and district health authorities.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Social workers and those who train them will read the Secretary of State's statement with interest, but they know—and surely he knows—that the reality is vacant places and case loads which have increasingly reached intolerably high levels. What is the Secretary of State going to do about the current national shortfall of social workers and especially about the crisis in London, where there are real problems in the recruitment and retention of social workers, because unless those central issues are addressed, all else is rhetoric?

Mr. Clarke: Of course, there is likely to be a continuing need for a growth in the number of social workers. The policy that I announced today of reinforcing the responsibility of local authorities and of the pending transfer of resources to enable them to do that will further that process. I know that the provision and condition of social services varies from place to place—this is not the time to go into that—but it is the management of the services in some of the London boroughs to which the hon. Gentleman has referred which most urgently needs to be addressed if the authorities are to get the best out of the opportunities that we have announced today.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his statement will be especially welcome to hon. Members such as myself who represent seaside communities, who have witnessed with considerable concern the proliferation of residential homes of an uneven quality in recent years, and who want to see a much better balance between home care and institutional care? What further measures does he envisage to raise the standard of those residential homes, following the Registered Homes Act 1984?

Mr. Clarke: Local authorities and health authorities have an existing duty to inspect and register such homes. The position remains unchanged for those who are residents in public homes. Residents of private homes who need public support will have help from the local authority in financing their place. Therefore, the local authority will not only inspect and register the home if it is a residential home—the health authority will perform that function if it is a nursing home—but will be buying that provision, having decided and accepted the responsibility for saying that that is the most suitable accommodation for the old person in question. The risk of people with public support entering homes that are sub-standard or to which they do not want to go will be greatly reduced by what we have announced today.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Is the Secretary of State aware that many elderly people in Birmingham prefer to live in homes that are run as a service by the city council instead of living in private homes that are run to make a profit? Why does he insist on continuing what is, in effect, a financial penalty on the city council for seeking to meet the wishes of elderly people?

Mr. Clarke: We have all been around many old people's homes and nursing homes. I have not found many people who are obsessed with whether the home that they are in is being run for profit or by the council. They are more concerned about whether a good standard of care is achieved in a good residential setting. That depends on the quality of the staff and on the quality of the care provided, regardless of ownership.

We are not changing the method of financing residents in local authority homes and we see no case for doing so for the reason that I gave earlier. No new discrimination is being introduced. We believe that most local authorities will want to concentrate on their new responsibilities and will not want to see a big expansion of their own management role in providing a service that they can get from others.

Mr. Alastair Goodlad (Eddisbury): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that his statement will be widely welcomed in many homes throughout the country and by those who work in community care—especially his confirmation that the arrangements affecting the mentally ill will be amplified by the Under-Secretary tomorrow? Does he recognise that the availability of hospital treatment for those who need it—especially for those suffering from conditions such as schizophrenia, which recurs at unpredictable intervals—depends as much as

anything else on the continued dedication and skill of those who work in our much too frequently maligned mental hospitals?

Mr. Clarke: I gladly agree with that. Schizophrenia is a particularly worrying condition; hospital treatment is absolutely necessary for all those who suffer from acute schizophrenia. Sometimes people are released into the community where they can satisfactorily enjoy a higher quality of life, but if they suffer a recurrence of acute schizophrenia they may require urgent readmission to hospital. I hope that the arrangements that I am proposing will enable us to keep in touch with those patients to ensure their prompt return to a secure and caring hospital setting whenever that is required. At the moment, such patients sometimes get lost and are found acutely ill and not being cared for, and that is something that we wish to avoid.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that he will have to clarify the question about section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 before he leaves the Chamber? If he has a word with his right hon. Friend the former Minister for Health, the present Chancelior of the Duchy of Lancaster, he will find —this will be confirmed by his hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) and by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), among other sponsors of that Bill—that that section, which the Secretary of State has criticised today, was included at the positive insistence of his right hon. Friend the former Minister for Health? Furthermore, some of the criticisms that we have heard this afternoon were advanced by the sponsors at that time. However, the then Minister for Health refused to budge one inch, and it would have jeopardised the whole Bill had we insisted upon the measures that the Secretary of State has advanced this afternoon. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman clarify that position?

Does the Secretary of State accept that, although the laudable objectives that he explained to the House about making proper arrangements and assessments for psychiatric patients leaving hospital and going into the community are welcome, they are not, at the moment, embraced in any legislation? If the Secretary of State is not going to implement section 7, is he going to amend it or to introduce new legislation to achieve his own objective? Has he therefore changed Government policy? Every Minister, including the Prime Minister, has said that it is the Government's intention to implement section 7 when the resources become available.

Finally, when the Secretary of State said that a White Paper would be made available in the autumn, did he mean during the recess?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I will gladly take the opportunity, when next I get it, of refreshing my memory of the debates in which I did not take part a few years ago. If I find that the hon. Gentleman was then expressing the doubts about section 7 that I have expressed today, I will review the position in the light of that.

I am not changing policy in relation to the 1986 Act and I am certainly not announcing today the implementation of section 7. We must now proceed with the new policy which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) said a moment ago, will be widely welcomed; we must then reassess the relevance of section 7 in the light of that.

The White Paper will be produced in the autumn. I do not have a firm timetable in mind, but it will probably be in the recess. If it is, I am sure that there will be plenty of opportunity to talk about it thereafter, because the policy will not be brought into effect until 1991.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry that I have not been able to call——

Hon. Members: On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me get my point of order in first.

I am sorry that I have not been able to call those hon. Members who were rising today, but I will certainly bear their claims in mind for the next opportunity to discuss the matter, possibly when we have Health questions.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Secretary of State's statement skipped over the important issue of housing. Could we have a report on the important issues of aids and adaptations to stairs in housing at some time in the future——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am afraid that this looks a clear case of continuation of questions on the statement.

Mr. Bob Cryer: (Bradford, South): Mine is different.

Mr. Speaker: A point of order?

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you had any requests from the Secretary of State for the Environment to come to the House to make a statement, because many important matters are at issue, about the selling off of old people's homes by the Tory spivs on Bradford council? This was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), but the Secretary of State did not respond to the point, possibly because it is not his direct responsibility. It is something of serious concern about which we should have a statement.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that that has been heard.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a point of order for me?

Mr. McKelvey: Yes, Sir. Is it in order for an answer to be given in reply to a written question on an important issue affecting the whole of Scotland, when the planter is not here to hear the debate and there is no Minister for Scotland on the Government Bench? It is disgraceful that that practice is allowed to continue.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me, but I did my best to bear in mind the claims of Scotland by calling a number of hon. Members representing Scotland.

[Mr. Speaker]

BILL PRESENTED

Control of Toxic Waste Residues

Mr. Frank Cook, supported by Ms. Marjorie Mowlam, Mr. Ted Leadbitter, Ms. Joyce Quin, Mr. John Cummings, Ms. Hilary Armstrong, Mr. Don Dixon. Ms. Joan Ruddock, Mr. Allan Roberts, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Mr. Tony Lloyd and Ms. Joan Walley, presented a Bill to protect the environment by controlling the manufacture and by regulating the disposal of toxic waste residues; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 181.]

Energy Efficiency (Labelling)

4.52 pm

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to introduce compulsory labelling of all domestic electrical appliances and devices to indicate the amount of energy that they consume; to impose penalties upon manufacturers and retailers who fail to provide such labelling; and for connected purposes.

One of the most surprising results of recent opinion polls on the environment was that in *The Times*, in which 12 million people said that they were prepared to pay substantial premiums for "environmentally friendly" products.

Without question, one of the most significant environmental problems facing the planet today is that of global warming, or the so-called greenhouse effect. While in no way would I wish to pre-empt the report of the Select Committee on Energy on the linkage between energy and the greenhouse effect, many facts pertaining to that phenomenon are already in the public domain.

It is generally agreed that about 50 per cent. of the contribution to greenhouse gases is made by carbon dioxide gas—the rest is made by methane, CFCs, nitrous oxide and surface ozone. At the Toronto meeting of world experts last June to consider the threats posed by changes to the global atmosphere, it was agreed that substantial global reductions of carbon dioxide emissions would be necessary over the next 40 years.

The United Kingdom production of carbon dioxide is 542 million tonnes a year, of which 205 million tonnes —about 38 per cent.—are produced by generating electricity, mainly from coal-fired power stations. To emphasise the direct link between electricity and carbon dioxide emissions, I shall take the simple example of a 100 W light bulb. When lit for 10 hours, it produces 1 kg of carbon dioxide. Over the average lifetime of 1,000 hours, 10 such light bulbs would produce 1 tonne of carbon dioxide. If we continue much as we have in the past, carbon dioxide output is likely to increase by more than 100 million tonnes—20 per cent.—by the year 2005. Any reduction, therefore, in electricity consumption will have a direct effect on carbon dioxide emissions and help to combat the greenhouse effect.

At a time of economic growth—both actual and predicted—demand is more likely to increase than decrease. The options are consequently rather limited and range between fuel substitution—that is, substituting gas for coal in our power stations—more nuclear power, which produces no carbon dioxide, and more energy conservation and efficiency.

The opportunities for improvements in energy efficiency lie in four main areas. First, the generation of electricity could be improved. It is worth noting that, for every 1,000 MW of coal-fired capacity replaced by renewable or nuclear generation, there is a reduction of 6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, which is 3 per cent. of our total electricial sector emissions. Secondly, we could improve electrical motors, which is by far the largest single category in industry. Thirdly, we could improve lighting. Fluorescent light bulbs are already available in this country that reduce the running costs of lighting and the consumption of electricity by a factor of 80 per cent.

Fourthly, by the use of the correct electrical appliances, there is potential for a reduction in electrical consumption.

There are wide differences in electrical consumption between appliances available in this country. A closer look at the differences between appliances reveals some remarkable figures. The average United Kingdom stock of refrigerators will each consume about 1,100 kW hours per year, but the best available mass produced refrigerator consumes only 180 kW hours per year, which is a reduction of 80 per cent. The same figures are true for freezers. For washing machines and dishwashers, the energy saving is 50 per cent.

Those machines are manufactured in Canada, the United States, Japan, West Germany and Denmark. I point especially to the latter two producers, because, come 1992, I can see that we will have considerable competition for appliance imports from those sources.

It has been postulated that if each household replaced current appliances with the best available, annual running costs would reduce by 75 per cent. Such a reduction in electricity consumption on electrical appliances alone would cut the United Kingdom's carbon dioxide output by almost 6 per cent.

It is generally agreed that no one policy option alone can ensure the necessary reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. The Toronto conference suggested 20 per cent. reductions by the year 2003. However, in a recent paper to Ministers, Mr. Ken Currie, of the energy technology supply unit, said that the Toronto targets were going to be very difficult to achieve.

The debate raging at present—manifested in the amendment to the Electricity Bill before their Lordships—is whether or not the newly privatised electricity supply industry gives sufficient powers to the Secretary of State or the director general to ensure changes in energy efficiency practice that will make progress towards a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. The Bill states categorically that the director general will have powers to promote energy efficiency, but it stops short of ideas such as "least cost planning" and any fiscal measures.

According to Mr. Currie, energy efficiency offers on paper the greatest scope in combating global warming through carbon dioxide emissions. However, despite great economic and technical potential for improved efficiency, it is very difficult to make it happen. The reasons are that it requires very large numbers of small and disaggregated actions—every light bulb in every home, so to speak; those actions are peripheral to the interests of many consumers; there is a slow turnover in equipment and buildings; and the problem is exacerbated by market imperfections, such as the lack of specific and unbiased information for the users.

I submit that it would be irresponsible not to make a start somewhere to break into this somewhat vicious circle, and where better than in the task of educating the public, as responsible consumers, by providing better information on energy efficiency? As a first step, we could introduce an energy efficiency labelling scheme for electrical appliances, which is exactly what my Bill attempts to do.

At present it is impossible to discover in the showroom or in the literature whether an appliance is efficient. A simple labelling scheme would give customers such information and would allow them to take energy and environmenal effects into account at the time of purchase. Schemes have been tried in the United Kingdom—unfortunately, unsuccessfully. John Lewis undertook a scheme for fridges and a pilot scheme was undertaken by Eastern electricity under the guidance of the Energy Efficiency Office. Ecological labelling has been a feature in many other countries. Consider, for example, the success of the Blue Angel scheme in West Germany. Currently, Ministers of the Department of Trade and Industry and of the Department of the Environment are discussing a green labelling scheme for this country. Labelling is not therefore a new concept for the country or the Government.

To be effective, labelling must not be over-regulatory or nit-picking. There is little point in using labels on those appliances where the difference in operating costs is minimal—for example, on microwave ovens, televisions, clothes dryers and home-heating equipment. Labelling would be of little use on those appliances that have small electricity consumption—for example, toasters and blenders.

Labelling therefore must be concentrated on those major appliances that have the most significant differences in electricial consumption—refrigerators, fridge-freezers, freezers, water heaters, washing machines, dishwashers and room air conditioners. Successful appliance labelling schemes are in operation in Germany, Australia and in the United States, which has by far the most comprehensive scheme.

The three essential characteristics of a good labelling scheme would be simple and clear presentation, relevant and understandable information and attractive, eye-catching design. My Bill would make it compulsory for manufacturers and retailers to label their electrical appliances to a standard and a regularised format. There would be three types of label, along the lines of the American model. First, an energy cost label would apply to fridges, freezers, water heaters and washing machines. That would show the actual electricity consumption, the estimated annual cost to operate based on average electricity prices, and the range of operating costs of competing brands of similar size and features. Secondly, there would be a generic label for boilers and furnaces; and, thirdly, an energy efficient rating label that would apply to air-conditioning equipment. The labels would have to be prominently displayed on the appliance and of a standard size and design, and would comply with European Community regulations.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister who said last December at the Royal Academy that we must heed the dangers posed by the greenhouse effect and that to ignore it could expose us to climatic changes whose dimensions and effects are unpredictable. She also said that energy efficiency is crucial.

Energy efficiency is a complex subject, not open to simplistic or easy solutions. Energy efficiency measures should be practical and workable. My Bill seeks to achieve those ends, and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Malcolm Moss, Mr. John Hannam, Mr. Roger Knapman, Mr. Michael Morris, Mr. David Curry, Mr. Michael Brown, Mr. Chris Butler, Dr. Michael Clark, Miss Ann Widdecombe, Mr. Ian Taylor and Mr. Peter Rost.

Energy Efficiency (Labelling)

Mr. Malcolm Moss accordingly presented a Bill to introduce compulsory labelling of all domestic electrical appliances and devices to indicate the amount of energy that they consume; to impose penalties upon manufacturers and retailers who fail to provide such labelling; and

for connected purposes; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Monday 24 July and to be printed. [Bill 182.]

Orders of the Day

Finance Bill

Not amended in the Committee (and as amended in the Standing Committee), further considered.

New Clause 4

PRIVATE MEDICAL INSURANCE (NO. 1)

'(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 56 concerning certification of contracts, premiums paid under such contracts shall be eligible for relief under section 54 whether or not the costs which are the subject of the indemnity in the contract relate only to charges levied by a certified provider.

(2) For the purposes of this clause a certified provider is either:

(a) the National Health Service, or

(b) a person providing treatments and medical services who

(i) undertake training of staff to a standard which is certified by the Department of Health to be at least comparable to that provided within the National Health Service,

(ii) when recruiting and employing staff trained within the National health service make a payment to the NHS to reimburse that service for the full cost of the training provided, and

(iii) are certified by the Department of Health as providing a full range of treatments and medical services for the elderly.

(3) An annual report shall be made by the Board distinguishing relief available in respect of certified contracts covering certified providers.'.—*[Dr. Marek.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

5.3 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss new clause 10—*Private Medical Insurance (No. 2)*—

'(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 56 concerning certification of contracts, no premiums paid under such contracts shall be eligible for relief under section 54 unless the costs which are the subject of the indemnity in the contract relate only to charges levied by a certified provider.

(2) For the purposes of this clause a certified provider is either:

(a) the National Health Service or

(b) a person providing treatments and medical services who:

(i) undertakes training of staff to a standard which is certified by the Department of Health to be at least comparable to that provided within the National Health Service,

(ii) when recruiting and employing staff trained within the National Health Service makes a payment to the NHS to reimburse that service for the full cost of the training provided; and

(iii) are certified by the Department of Health as providing a full range of treatments and medical services for the elderly.'.

Dr. Marek: New clause 4 seeks to tighten up some of the handouts and giveaways that the Government propose with their tax relief on private medical insurance.

When the tax relief was hinted at in the Budget it came as a great surprise to the Opposition. That relief is contrary to the principles and statements that I have heard in Committees considering Finance Bills. It is certainly

contrary to the principles that have been espoused by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury and by the Economic Secretary to the Treasury. They know that there is only a small difference between the way in which the Opposition would tackle the reform of certain parts of taxation and the way in which they have done it. We are completely at a loss to understand the introduction of tax relief on private medical insurance. The only explanation is that they have had their orders and that, faithful to their mistress, they have simply jumped to it and ordered their civil servants and the parliamentary draftsmen to allow her to get her way once again.

I shall not be accused of not telling the truth when I say that that tax relief is not wanted by the Treasury. For the life of me, I cannot perceive the principles that allow the Treasury to include this relief in the Finance Bill. The Financial Secretary will be replying to this debate, and we and people outside will want him to explain why that tax relief should be in the Finance Bill; after all, Government Members will have to vote for it later.

This tax relief is contrary to many of the financial principles that have been espoused by hon. Members on the Treasury Front Bench in recent years. It is also a dangerous proposal as it represents part of the scheme to break up the National Health Service. This afternoon we had a statement on the Griffiths report; it is difficult to say what the outcome of that statement will be in the long run. No doubt it will depend on the amount of money that the Government make available for the proposals that the Secretary of State for Health outlined. If the money is not there, however, it is likely that that part of the Health Service connected with community care will suffer and wither away. What is left will provide a second-class service for people who depend on the NHS while a first-class service will be provided in the private sector. The Government's proposals on medical insurance will play their part in that as tax relief will be given to people who have private medical insurance.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): The argument has been rehearsed in Committee. The hon. Gentleman should know that that tax relief does not mean the destruction, or even a move towards the destruction, of the NHS. In a sense the proposals are a means of strengthening provision to elderly people across the board by enabling those people, many of whom have already opted for private health care, to continue it during their retirement. It is an wholly interesting proposal and I am sure that the Treasury is as enthusiastic for it as are my hon. Friends on the Back Benches.

Dr. Marek: The Treasury will have to speak for itself in due course. Many hon. Members are extremely concerned about those proposals. New clause 4 would make the operation of those proposals more open and more available to the public for scrutiny.

If many people are already paying for private medical insurance, as the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) suggested, what is the point of giving them further money in the form of tax handouts from the state purse? The hon. Gentleman cannot argue that the relief is an incentive to take out private medical insurance if people have already done so. From figures available to me it is clear that only 2·6 per cent. of pensioners are paying the 40 per cent. tax rate. It is those pensioners who will receive the greatest tax handout as they pay the highest rate of income tax.

We have a deep-rooted objection to the proposals in the Finance Bill. We tried to defeat the relevant clauses in Committee, but the Government had a large majority and we did not have a chance. It was impossible to effect any opposition.

Even though I suspect that at the back of their minds and in their hearts many Conservative Members realise that this runs counter to many other policies in the Finance Bill, they are not prepared to stand up and say so. They are not prepared to say, "We have had to do this simply because the Prime Minister has decided for some reason or another that this tax handout is to be given to the rich and the super rich." I say that because the Financial Secretary would be disappointed if I did not use that form of words at some time while proposing the new clause.

If the proposals are not available for the public to scrutinise, a great deal of money will be given away, the public will be none the wiser and an activity that we believe to be dreadfully wrong will be carried out from year to year without public scrutiny. The new clause would prevent that. We seek to expose what is happening because we believe that the National Health Service is about to be broken up. We believe that not just because of the proposals that we heard this afternoon, but because of the Government's proposals in relation to the elderly and mentally ill, hospitals being able to opt out of the National Health Service and doctors being able to run their own budgets. Our worry is compounded by these proposals because people who take private medical care and opt out will receive tax handouts.

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that by repeating the words "opt out of the NHS" he is deliberately misrepresenting the Government's proposals? Hospitals are being invited to opt for self-governing status within the NHS. Will he cease to perpetrate this myth, which is carried on in the media and forms part of a campaign that simply misrepresents the Government's proposals? Can he not see that there is a distinction between hospitals governing themselves and being governed by their own management within the system and the "opt out" to which he refers? It does him no credit to keep perpetrating this myth in the hope that eventually it will be repeated, parrot-like, across the country.

Dr. Marek: For every time that the Opposition can be accused of trying to mislead the public, they can levy the charge 10 times against the Government for using selective statistics or figures. They start in 1979 when it suits them, or in 1983 when 1979 figures are not so suitable, or they use those for the past two or three years when 1979 or 1983 figures are unsuitable.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): The hon. Gentleman admits to misleading the public.

Dr. Marek: I do not admit to trying to mislead the public, as the Economic Secretary suggests; I am being accurate. Hospitals will opt out of an integrated National Health Service that is free at the point of need. If they become self-governing, the cheque book mentality will come to the fore. But I shall not pursue that line because I could stray a little too far from the new clause, although

[Dr. Marek]

that would ensure that any of these activities is open to public scrutiny and scrutiny by the House and that annual reports will be prepared.

The problem with medical tax insurance is that people must be rich enough to afford it. If they do not pay income tax, the Government will not give them anything. If they pay only a little bit of income tax, they will not receive much. They have to be rich to be able to afford to take advantage of the Government's proposals. The richer one is, the better off one will be. The Government's philosophy is that, to those who have shall be given.

Not only do people have to be rich enough, but they must be well enough to sign up. If they are chronically ill or have a bad medical history, no insurance company will take them on. It is yet again to a small class of people that this Government seek to, and will, give money from the Treasury which could well be spent elsewhere. We are being asked to subsidise, from our taxes, the private medical insurance of people who are already wealthy enough and who, by and large, already pay for private treatment without the need for subsidy.

Our new clause would constrain the Government by making them open their books and to account publicly for how the money will be given away. It also makes them justify the scheme's operation.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): The hon. Gentleman has just talked about people who are "wealthy enough" and do not need the help offered under the Government's proposals. He will be aware that old-age pensioners receiving state pension use almost all their age allowance with the state pension. Anyone who has a modest occupational pension or even earnings above that level will pay income tax at the standard rate and will therefore benefit from the proposals. By no stretch of the imagination could those people be called wealthy.

Dr. Marek: Exactly—there is much sense in what the hon. Gentleman has said. People with small occupational pensions, who, I agree, are certainly not wealthy, will not have enough money to take out private medical insurance and still have enough left for their daily needs and to be able to lead sensible lives in their old age. Those people are not the targets of this tax handout and giveaway. The targets are those who are much wealthier than people with ordinary occupational pensions. I hope that the hon. Gentleman understands that point.

Of course, it is possible for people who are paying income tax to benefit from this tax handout by obtaining private medical insurance. However, I suspect that people in those circumstances will be able to say, "I am sorry. The money that we have available at our disposal at the end of every week is insufficient for us to afford the luxury of private medical insurance." They could rightly say, "We shall stick with the National Health Service."

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): The hon. Gentleman uses the terms "rich" and "super rich". For those of us who have not had the advantage of serving on the Committee, will he define those terms? Which level of income constitutes "rich" and which "super rich"?

Dr. Marek: The hon. Gentleman must sign up, become a member of the next Finance Bill Committee and take part in our discussions. The question that he posed has been asked before. I shall disappoint the hon. Gentleman if he thinks that I am about to give a cast-iron definition so that people with a penny less than the sum stipulated will not be in the super rich category and those with a penny more will definitely be in it. He must take me for being slightly naive. Perhaps I am sometimes, but I am not naive enough to give such a definition.

Some people are extremely rich and have so much money that they do not know what to do with it. They cannot even find out how much money they have. There are people in this country who do not know how much they are worth. They have millions of pounds—or at least hundreds of thousands of pounds—of ready, available liquid assets over and above any insurances, houses or property. They would fall into the class of the super, super rich. There are people who are not in that class, but I shall not take up any more of the House's time with that definition. I hope that I have been able to educate the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) a little.

The Opposition object to the proposals because they represent bad taxation policy. There is no case for them. Hon. Members need only to cast their minds back to debates in Committee and yesterday when pleas were made for concessions. Hon. Members from both sides of the House said that this was not the right way to run a fair tax policy with a level playing field. The Opposition would be the first to say that, in some circumstances, we would not want a level playing field, but there must be justifiable reasons for it. Those reasons do not exist in this case.

For private medical insurance to receive tax relief is clearly against every principle that the Financial Secretary and the Economic Secretary espoused in Committee. It is the equivalent of the Financial Secretary going to Lord's on a dark night and digging up the cricket pitch. He had a level playing field but has now decided to roughen it up so that it slopes upwards and forces those without money to bowl uphill, whereas those with money can bowl the other way. That is a reasonable analogy for what the Government are doing.

The new clause would also bring under public scrutiny the point that the relief is not well targeted. Instead of targeting those who need more medical care or medical insurance, the Government are targeting those who can stay with the NHS or who already have money and do not need extra handouts. The Financial Secretary does not have up his sleeve an argument to contradict what I have just said. We accept that benefits have to be targeted, and we have listened to the Secretary of State for Social Security, the Secretary of State for Health and other Ministers tell us that every benefit must be targeted so that relief goes to those who need it. However, there is no targeting with this provision. It is a straightforward handout to people who have money and are already using it for medical insurance. There is no incentive argument or targeting argument for it.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The same argument applies to child benefit. Why is the Labour party opposed to targeting child benefit and taxing that?

Dr. Marek: I do not want to stray too far, but I can answer the hon. Gentleman. There is a difference with child benefit. It goes to the mother, there is a 100 per cent. take-up and, although the targeting is not perfect, it is not bad. The targeting percentage score for child benefit is between 60 and 80 per cent., but for this measure it is zilch.

We should like to bring under public scrutiny the fact that if anybody wants family credit or income support, he has to fill up forms and be interviewed, and snooper squads come round to his house if there is any hint of impropriety or if a jealous neighbour tries to get his own back. The full panoply of state supervision and state regulation, and the overburdening authority of the state, are put on those people by the Government and the Conservative party.

However, if one wants private medical insurance, one need only send a little note to one's accountant and he will fix everything. There are no snoopers and no reams of forms to fill in. It is all straightforward. One does not have to appear in a social security office, wait in a long queue and waste a morning to get one's entitlement. The philosophy is compietely different. That is another difference between the Government's attitude towards income support and family credit and their attitude towards this measure.

Mr. Couchman: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his generosity in giving way again. On this point, will he concede that there is a difference between making an allowance against income tax—that is, not taking away so much income tax—and distributing public funds by way of income support, which is distributing new money to the recipient? The hon. Gentleman said that there would be no snooping, but the Inland Revenue takes a healthy interest in our tax affairs, and if it has any suspicions, I am sure that it will be there just as enthusiastically as would be the Department of Social Security investigating team in other circumstances.

Dr. Marek: I hope that, if the new clause is passed, some of the reports that will be produced will bear out my point. If the Government appointed enough income tax inspectors so that the Inland Revenue could take proper control over those whom it thought were fiddling income tax returns—most of whom have something to do with the City—it would be more efficient. I know that most people in the City are honest, but some are not and they fiddle enormously large sums. Furthermore, if income tax inspectors were paid properly, they would not fly off to private industry as they do because of the Government's Scrooge-like policies.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, the only difference is administrative. The effect of giving money, either as a tax allowance or as a grant, is to ensure that people can lead decent and dignified lives. Whether people receive that money by way of tax allowance or by way of grant from the Department of Social Security is neither here nor there. There is no effective difference. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will think about that. We have to treat people on the same basis even though the circumstances of some people are different from those of others.

I have here an important figure on which I hope that some of my hon. Friends will expand later: two thirds of pensioner households pay no income tax. Therefore, they will not benefit from these tax handouts. Only 2·6 per cent. of pensioners pay the top rate—40 per cent.—of tax. Only 2·6 per cent. of pensioners will benefit from this measure. It will be worse than that, because pensioners do not have to pay for these benefits. Often their yuppie children will pay for them, so this measure is a licence to allow a yuppie who wants to to pay money for the care of his or her elderly parents.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): Why does the hon. Gentleman think that it is impossible for non-taxpayers to benefit from what is in the Bill?

Dr. Marek: It is not impossible. I have not examined the statistics, but I think that I am right to say that, by and large, pensioners who do not pay income tax cannot pay income tax and are not in a family group with yuppies so rich that they can pay for private medical insurance. I am prepared to be persuaded by the right hon. Gentleman, but he will have to see whether his civil servants can provide any statistics for his assertion. I think that they probably cannot.

We are against these proposals because treatment in the National Health Service is much cheaper than treatment in private hospitals. I can give a simple example. In the NHS, the cost of a tonsillectomy is £360, but the private cost can be anything from £600 to £1,400. This tax relief is aimed at the wrong target. Instead of using the money by way of tax relief, it should be given to the NHS so that it can provide for the medical welfare of our old-age pensioners direct, and when they need it.

We have tabled the new clause because we object to the original proposals and we want to make sure that the results of the clauses that the Government insisted should be included in the Bill are open to public scrutiny in due course. The sum involved is large—the Treasury suggests £40 million, but we suspect that it will be about £200 million. Some people suspect that it is an open-ended commitment.

5.30 pm

I hope that the Government will recognise our need to be given the details of the scheme. Without those details, the new clause was restricted to providing that an annual report, covering various matters, should be made by the board. The Chief Secretary wrote to my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 6 June, enclosing a copy of a letter to medical insurance companies asking for details of how the proposed scheme would operate. I believe that a copy of that letter has now been placed in the Library.

There are some curious aspects to the scheme. For example, treatment must take place at an NHS hospital, at a hospital instituted by a special Act of Parliament or incorporated by Royal Charter, or at premises registered under part II of the Registered Homes Act 1984. Does that mean that the public will be giving tax handouts to rich people staying in registered old people's homes? What is the substance of the Government's argument? Is the scheme supposed to be some sort of incentive? Earlier today the Secretary of State for Health said that, wherever possible, old people should be in the community. The proposals are contrary not only to previous Treasury policy, but to the policy of the Department of Health.

I am glad to note that there will be some rules and regulations on qualifying benefits. According to the consultation document, accommodation charges will qualify, including those for parents accompanying a child. Home nursing charges will also qualify. The only people who will benefit from that are the very rich, who would have home nursing anyway and do not need to be given a cash handout as a little sweetener. There will be a cash maternity benefit. It is surely no part of the state's job to give cash handouts to people who want to insure against

[Dr. Marek]

maternity. Of course, it is part of the state's job to ensure that there is adequate maternity and paternity leave for all, irrespective of wealth. Parents should be able to bear a child without hardship. A proposal to give a cash handout to the rich people who want to insure against maternity shows the Tory party for what it is, who its friends are, what its priorities are and who it supports.

When we consider other amendments later, I might adopt a different tone because some of the Government's amendments are helpful. However, the medical insurance clauses are ill-advised, ill-thought-out and badly targeted because they serve only the rich. The Government have not even drawn up the regulations. I commend our new clause to the House.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancaster, West): As is usual in these debates, the Opposition have shown a mindless objection to anything that smacks of individual initiative or of benefit to those prepared to put their hands in their pockets to pay for it. Underlying the Opposition's arguments is their fundamental objection to private medical care. They will oppose any measure, no matter who it benefits, on that principle alone.

I wish to raise one important aspect of our health care. Britain's health spending in the public sector is comparable to that of most European Community and OECD countries. However, on health spending in the private sector Britain is a long way behind. The Opposition forget that, in general, the two expenditures are added together, so they criticise the Government and claim that other countries—especially West Germany—spend far more than Britain.

The Bill will help those in need to redress the imbalance by increasing the amount of private health spend and so provide a more realistic view of our overall health spending. The medical insurance clauses prime pump additional resources into Britain's health care facilities and will attract resources that otherwise would not come into the system. Without those additional resources, the cost of providing health care for the elderly would fall entirely upon the NHS and the taxpayers who fund it. It could even reduce the overall standard of care for all in our community.

Currently 14 per cent. of the population are old-age pensioners, but by the year 2010 the figure will rise to 18 per cent. With that demographic change will come heavier demands for the care of the elderly, especially home and hospital care and community care as a whole. The Bill will assist the provision of future health care for the elderly. Fewer people will be earning a wage by the year 2010, so fewer people, through tax and national insurance, will have to carry the burden of supporting a larger number of pensioners. The Bill looks to the future and provides sensible planning to meet future needs.

The new clause is an attempt to disrupt the Government's plans——

Mr. Couchman: It is a wrecking amendment.

Mr. Hind: My hon. Friend is right; it is purely and simply a wrecking amendment. The Opposition want to make it as difficult as possible for the Government to give the elderly an opportunity to benefit from private health care. The major aspect of this wrecking amendment is the annual report by the board

"distinguishing relief available in respect of certified contracts covering certified providers."

As usual, the Opposition are suffering from quangoitis. They want to set up a national body to administer the system, but to restrict the number of people who can provide health care by confining it to certified providers. The Opposition's usual tactic when they cannot defeat an argument because of its intellectual soundness is to try to wreck it by introducing unworkable practices.

The Opposition's new clauses ignore those elderly people who, when they retire, will find that it is far more costly to obtain medical insurance. I emphasise the word "insurance" because it carries with it a risk. The older one is, the greater the risk and the higher the premium—and the less likely it is that people will enter into such a contract. New clauses 4 and 10 will allow people who want private health care to invest in it if they have the means to do so, and at the same time assist the state in providing increased resources.

My experience as a constituency Member of Parliament is that many people who have enjoyed private health care all their lives find it disheartening that they cannot afford it when they grow older. The new clauses, together with the increase in the number of pensioners and other demographic changes, will not help to provide good health care for the older members of the population.

The Opposition amendment adds nothing to the Bill. It is not helpful but rather attempts to undermine the Government's proposals. I have no hesitation in saying that my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary should see the Opposition amendment for what it is and dismiss it.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Although the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) may speak sincerely on behalf of the elderly, he allowed himself to present a series of fallacies. One is the belief that it is impossible to be in favour of private health care and opposed to the provision of tax relief as an incentive to subscribe to such care. That is manifestly not the case. Even people on the Right among those who advise the Conservative party are in favour of private health care but do not believe that the tax system should subsidise it.

Similarly, it is not the case that we welcome the clause. The Social Services Select Committee, which has a majority of Conservative Members, commented in its fifth report:

"In our judgment, the creation of new tax subsidy on private health insurance cannot be demonstrated to extend total availability of health care. It would reduce the total public expenditure from which Health Service resources are drawn while at the same time narrowing the tax base still further."

There are many critics of the Government's proposals in all parts of the House, and the authorship of those proposals is the subject of some discussion and dispute. To me, they are the Dulwich clauses, based on the Prime Minister's concept of retirement and of how she and her husband will be able to provide for their own. The clauses are not based on the perspectives of most ordinary people, on how they must provide for retirement, and on their dependence on a properly funded National Health Service.

The vast majority of people depend on a properly funded Health Service. If any money is available for health care, they want to see it invested in the Health Service, yet

at the time when the NHS is under considerable pressure the public can see money being diverted to subsidise those who are able to take advantage of private health insurance.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), like the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), who has left the Chamber, speaks in vague terms about a "properly funded Health Service". Given that there has been a 40 per cent. increase in real terms in Health Service spending since 1979, what percentage increase does the hon. Gentleman think would have been appropriate, and what is his party's projection for the future?

Mr. Beith: In our last general election manifesto, we said that a 2 per cent. increase in Health Service resources is required over and above that projected to meet the immediate pressures on the service. The Social Services Committee presented its own proposals for further funding of the Health Service. The hon. Gentleman cannot go anywhere in the National Health Service without finding people who are well aware that it cannot be properly run without additional resources. If the hon. Gentleman cannot see that, he is blinding himself to the obvious.

5.45 pm

The resources that the Government are currently directing at the Health Service cannot keep pace with the considerable pressures that it faces, which include the increasing number of elderly people—the vast majority of whom are dependent upon the NHS—and the opportunities and demands that improving medical technology create, and of which we are all aware from our constituency case work. They all place on the Health Service a funding requirement that the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) must be alone in not understanding.

Treasury Ministers in particular have some difficulty defending and explaining the proposals to which new clause 4 are directed. I am sure that in the Prime Minister's mind they are the beginning of a process whereby the private sector will be asked to bear much greater responsibility for the health of the people, based on the mistaken assumption that the private sector is capable of meeting that responsibility. I am not saying that the private sector cannot contribute to the country's health care, but it will inevitably select those activities that are most profitable and which best fit its framework. That will create even more work for the public Health Service. The more that the private sector can contribute to an increase in hip operations, for example, the more aftercare will have to be undertaken by the public service.

Treasury Ministers have moved to a different standpoint. They argue, as suggested by the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), that the clause is much more limited in scope and will assist only those elderly people who already have private health insurance and who will find it difficult to continue to meet that commitment when they reach retirement age. If that is the Government's objective, they could have drafted the clause more narrowly, which was the purpose of my earlier amendment. It is difficult for the Government to sustain that argument while maintaining the deadweight argument against other proposals.

Last night, the House debated child care and workplace nurseries. I presented an amendment to provide tax relief for workplace nurseries and for wider child care provisions. The Financial Secretary responded:

"I have to reject his new clause on the grounds of cost and of its very large deadweight element . . . The effect of the new clause would give a large tax subsidy to people who are already making this provision."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1989; Vol. 156, c. 896-97.]

That is the same argument that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury used to defend the provisions of the Bill. He commented:

"In a ringfence way it will help many elderly people who wish to continue medical insurance cover on retirement but who are unable to do so because they have lost the benefit of the employer scheme."—[*Official Report*, 4 May 1989; Vol. 152, c. 351.]

The clause apparently exists to help people who already make provision for private health care to continue doing so. It will also benefit many who do not suffer from the particular disadvantage to which the Chief Secretary referred, of starting in an employer's scheme and then finding on retirement that they no longer benefit from the employer's contribution.

The Government cannot have it both ways. They oppose tax reliefs that have a high deadweight cost because they give a subsidy to people who are already making their own provision, and then argue that the clause's primary purpose is to give just that type of relief. That is a nonsensical argument for the Government to make, and it illustrates that Treasury Ministers are being forced to adopt the Prime Minister's baby.

Mr. Hind: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that private medical care, with tax relief for pensioners, will be a pump-priming measure that will attract greater resources into the totality of our Health Service, both public and private, and that that will not happen unless the clause is implemented? The cost of providing extra health services will otherwise fall on taxpayers overall. The clause will help to improve the standard of health care, not the reverse.

Mr. Beith: I have never heard Treasury Ministers argue that the purpose of the clause is pump priming—that its objective is to enlarge the private health sector through the use of a public tax-relief subsidy. Perhaps they will decide to introduce that argument tonight. The Financial Secretary shakes his head: clearly he does not accept the pump-priming argument. In his view, the measure will help a limited number of elderly people who have already made commitments. The right hon. Gentleman would find it difficult to extend the pump-priming argument, because he must be aware—if he were not, I suspect that the Department of Health would have made him aware—that, far from reducing the total burden on the Health Service, the legislation is likely to increase it. In so far as it has any benefit, it will leave the most expensive kinds of provision in the hands of the Health Service. The Health Service will still be picking up the tab for all the tasks that the private sector cannot perform—all the long-term care, aftercare and residential care—and possibly adding to the volume of work.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): The Health Service—in other words, the taxpayer—is doing precisely that now. The scheme to provide medical care for the elderly is intended not only to help the elderly, but to take some of the burden away from the National Health

[Sir William Clark]

Service. It will mean more resources for the NHS, because some elderly people will take advantage of private health care.

Mr. Beith: It will not take the burden away from the NHS. It will take away staff who already do the work in the NHS—consultants who perform operations, and a work force that the NHS has trained—who will then be used to carry out a much more limited range of functions. The NHS will be left to provide aftercare for the same patients, and to care for all those for whom the private sector has made no attempt at provision.

All the publicity for private health care makes it pretty clear what cannot be obtained from it. It is obvious from a reading of that literature that the private system will be highly selective in what it offers. Many of those who work in the Health Service know full well how they could enhance the service if they had either £40 million or the much larger sums that may go into this form of tax relief in the future.

If Conservative Members really believe that the burden on the Health Service would be reduced by extensive tax relief for private care, they will not stop the pensioners; tax relief for private health care will become a general provision. I hope that the Minister will deal with that. His hon. Friends' case is that the measure will relieve the NHS of its burden so effectively that the effects will be seen most clearly where the burden is lighter. If the Minister accepts that argument, he will have to explain what further plans the Government have to extend tax relief throughout the system rather than confining it to the elderly. *[Interruption.]*

I hear hints that some Conservative Members may wish the Government to do that. If they took such a step—which many of us believe to be in the minds of some of their members, if not those of Treasury Ministers—they would deal a terrible blow to the Health Service and its morale. They would also convince the majority of people that they believe in a two-tier Health Service, with a private system for those who can afford it and a public system for the rest—the rest being the majority, who will be expected to accept second best. Those who work in the Health Service do not want to give second best: they are capable of, and have given, the very best, and they are entitled to the resources that they need to provide that level of service.

Mr. Couchman: I had not intended to speak, but I have listened with a growing sense of wonderment to the blind prejudice and dogma emanating from the other side of the Chamber. It was ever thus. It is worth reminding Opposition Members that it was Barbara Castle, when she was Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, who killed off paybeds in the National Health Service—no doubt with the support of every Labour Member who is present now. They would have seen them all go; and very few are left.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Couchman: No, I will not give way so early in my speech.

The new clause defines a certified provider as the National Health Service, but there is little private practice in NHS hospitals: that, of course, is the point of this wrecking measure. Subsection (2)(b)(i) goes on to give the extraordinary definition of a certifed provider as someone who will

"undertake training of staff to a standard which is certified by the Department of Health to be at least comparable to that provided within the National Health Service".

What staff? Nurses? Doctors? Paramedical staff? Porters? The new clause does not say, but I think that the royal colleges, which determine the appropriate places in which training can take place, might well have something to say.

Subsection (2)(b)(ii) provides a further definition: a person who will,

"when recruiting and employing staff trained within the National Health Service, make a payment to the NHS to reimburse that service for the full cost of the training provided".

Will that apply for ever? If a nurse has given 30 years of service to the NHS and, in her twilight years of nursing, decides to do some work in a private hospital, will that private hospital then have to reimburse the NHS for the full cost of her training 30 years previously? What nonsense. It is blind prejudice and dogma—but what else would one expect?

What the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said was not much better. He talked in a rather pejorative way abut the "Dulwich clauses". That, of course, is the kind of slogan that would appeal to the Liberals—or are they the Liberal Democrats, the Democrats or the Social and Liberal Democrats? Anyway, it would appeal to whatever party the hon. Gentleman currently supports.

Mr. Worthington: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Couchman: Certainly not. I have not got into my speech yet.

I said earlier, when the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) generously gave way to me, that it was not the rich who would primarily benefit. Many people, until they reach the age of 60 or 65, are members of private health care insurance schemes, for which they may pay under a company scheme or which may be paid for by the company. Alternatively, they may purchase individual health care insurance. When they reach the age of 60 or 65, their income drops and their ability to pay for private insurance becomes that much less. An allowance such as my right hon. Friend proposes would provide precisely the incentive that many such people need to continue paying for private health care insurance when they have retired. They have made their contribution through national insurance and income tax, and they will continue to contribute if they continue to pay income tax, as part of that tax funds the NHS. They are only being given back some of their own money.

The elderly, after all, make the heaviest use of health care generally, and private health care resources provide many of the services that enhance their quality of life—cold surgery, hip operations and so forth. It relieves pressure on the NHS at just the point where the pressure is greatest and the waiting lists are longest.

I shall have no difficulty in supporting my right hon. Friend and rejecting the silly, dogmatic ideological prejudice expressed in this new clause.

6 pm

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): I had not intended to refer to the speeches of the hon. Members for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) and for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), and my generally charitable nature will lead me to forbear from commenting in this instance. They may, however, wish to intervene during my speech in order to make the same idiotic points as they have already made, using the ludicrously constructed briefs that they have obviously had from the Whips Office.

Mr Hind: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Moonie: No, I shall not give way on that point.

This is one of the least popular and least needed measures in this Finance Bill. The Government are proposing to give a large handout from the Exchequer to suppliers of private medical care, with no requirement being placed on them to account for how the money is spent. The new clauses are a very small attempt to remedy that failure.

Let me explain the reason behind those statements. The proposed tax break will be given to individuals or their relatives, regardless of need. The intention is to encourage more people to take out private health insurance, despite the fact that there must be a large question mark over the advisability of using public funds to entice people to make such a choice, one which they have clearly been free to make up to now but which they have chosen not to make. It surely cannot be a sound use of public money to prop up an expensive and unattractive service.

Moreover, a huge deadweight cost is involved—a tax break of up to £200 a year for all those currently holding such policies who, by definition, can afford to pay the premiums and who are healthy. If they are not healthy, they will not be covered by private medical insurance. Why on earth should we be spending taxpayers' money on people who are healthy and wealthy and who are so manifestly not in need of such help?

As my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) has made clear, we cannot believe that the Treasury Ministers favour such a stupid move. It is against all the principles of fair taxation and also of those principles that are involved in constructing a broad tax base. Where will the money go? Health care is expensive, especially in the private sector where it is up to four to five times dearer than in the National Health Service. Premiums have risen at a fantastic rate over the last few years. They will rise even faster, now that the Government are to subsidise up to 40 per cent. of the cost. Can any Conservative Member deny that that will be the case? It has been so in every other instance where the Government have stepped in to subsidise private insurance. Instead of the money being used to benefit the individuals concerned, it will go directly or indirectly into the pockets of those who provide health care through increased premiums.

Private medicine does not pay the true costs of the service that it provides. It is not complementary to the National Health Service. It exists in a parasitic relationship with the public service, preying on its skilled staff—nurses, laboratory technicians, scientific, medical and paramedical people, to name the main areas involved. All these staff are trained within the National Health Service. Their training is paid for out of the public purse. All the staff are either in short supply or need to be employed in much greater numbers within the National Health Service to make up for the disgraceful shortages that exist in so many areas.

The statement on community care that was made earlier today, which I welcome, will place additional pressures on the need for trained staff within the National Health Service. It is high time that the private sector showed that it feels some sense of responsibility to the service on which it preys. The new clauses would do just that.

If we look at them carefully, we see that new clause 4 provides that a register should be kept of private medical concerns which either provide training themselves or make a payment to the NHS to reimburse it for the full cost of the training of the people whom they employ. New clause 10 goes further. It stipulates that tax subsidies will be paid only to firms that do provide some form of reimbursement for the costs that have been incurred. For example, they would have to undertake staff training to a standard that is similar to or comparable with that in the National Health Service, or they would have to reimburse the National Health Service for the cost of the training that has been provided. Who could quarrel with such a reasonable proposal?

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Dr. Moonie: Obviously the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) wishes to quarrel with it.

Mr. Bennett: Given that this country employs large numbers of teachers who have been trained abroad and large numbers of nurses who were trained in other countries, is the hon. Gentleman proposing that a Labour Government, should one ever be elected, would reimburse those countries for the staff who have been trained in those countries and who work over here?

Dr. Moonie: That sounds an excellent idea, one which I could not have imagined would be thought of by the hon. Member for Pembroke, since he contributes so much nonsense to our debates on health care, as witnessed by his comments earlier this afternoon.

The new clauses are reasonable. No fair person could possibly object to them. They will ensure either that private firms which recognise their responsibilities are given fair recognition for their investment or that this subsidy from everybody else's pocket to the private sector is paid only to those who carry out their responsibilities. I commend the new clauses to the House.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): The debate provides us with a useful opportunity to highlight the Labour party's inherent hostility to private medicine. Much of the debate on the National Health Service in recent months has naturally tended to concentrate upon the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients", supplemented by the Budget provisions that we are considering. Very little attention has consequently been paid to the Opposition's policies relating to health care.

There are two things that we know about the Opposition's health care policy, both of which are damaging. First, they would abolish private practice in medicine, something which Barbara Castle sought to do in 1966. Secondly, they would undermine the concept of competitive tendering.

It is interesting to consider what the implications of the proposals would be if private health care in Oxfordshire

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

were to be undermined, and also how much income private health care brings to the National Health Service. Private patient income in Oxfordshire amounts to approximately £2·5 million in this financial year. Competitive tendering will save the Oxfordshire district health authority approximately £700,000 this year.

If one combines the effect of private patient income and competitive tendering, the saving amounts to £3,200,000. If competitive tendering were to be abolished and if no private patients were to be treated within the National Health Service, as each NHS consultant costs approximately £46,000, the effect of the Opposition's proposals on Oxfordshire district health authority would be that the funding of about 96 consultants would be removed. That would be wholly negative, wholly damaging and wholly detrimental to the National Health Service, for no reason other than to satisfy Opposition dogma as to private health care and to meet the demands of certain public sector trade unions about competitive tendering.

If the Opposition ever came into office, it is important to highlight the fact that almost overnight they would considerably undermine the funding of district health authorities. The effect on one district health authority alone—Oxfordshire—would be the loss of 96 consultants.

Mr. Worthington: The major savings after privatisation have related to staff wages and staff conditions. Does the hon. Gentleman concede that, if we were to pay the staff nothing, we should be able to employ an enormous number of consultants?

Mr. Baldry: It must be for the hon. Gentleman to judge whether he really feels that that was a sensible contribution to the debate.

Competitive tendering has led to substantial savings in the National Health Service. Those savings have been and are being used for better patient care. The Opposition are blinded by ideology and trade union commitments.

Mr. Couchman: Does my hon. Friend agree that the tax allowance proposed in the Bill would generate more money than the actual saving in taxation? The figures show that two and a half to three times the amount given away will be generated in additional health care resources.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend makes a very good point, which I had hoped would be taken on board much earlier in the debate. I had hoped that many of the points would be taken on board in Committee of the whole House. For many of us there is a sense of deja vu about the debate. We have covered the ground before, but it seems that the Opposition are incapable of taking on board the essential facts.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Deja non vu.

Mr. Baldry: I bow to my right hon. Friend's superior knowledge of French. Whether it is deja vu or deja non vu, the Opposition are not grasping it, so we have to take them through it yet again.

Many people have private health care as part of their remuneration package. Many employers negotiate private health care packages for their employees. Many trade unions now negotiate private health care. While those people are in employment, that private health care subscription is paid as part of their remuneration. When they retire, not only does their income drop but their health care subscription is no longer paid for them. That is nonsense. The provision in the Finance Bill encourages those who have medical insurance cover during their working lives to continue it in retirement. That is a perfectly straightforward provision. Many people in group schemes when their employers negotiate insurance cover for their employees could keep that cover, given some fiscal encouragement.

The Opposition have said on a number of occasions that that encouragement will simply go to those who are better off. That canard should be dismissed at every opportunity. About 5·5 million people—or one in 10 of the population—are now covered by medical insurance schemes, many of them through company or trade union schemes. The great majority of the tax relief that the provision would produce would go to standard rate taxpayers. About 80 per cent. of the provision would go to basic rate taxpayers aged over 60 or to those who are not liable to tax. The benefit of the provision will go mainly to those who have worked throughout their lives, and whose employers paid into a medical insurance scheme, and will enable them to continue that scheme into retirement.

Dr. Moonie: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us how many people he knows who pay no tax but could pay £600 a year in private medical insurance? I should dearly like to know.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Ken Dodd.

Mr. Baldry: I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts the general thrust of my point, that the provision will not affect primarily the higher rate taxpayer, as the Opposition have suggested, but will go to those paying the basic rate. The humorous interventions from the Opposition demonstrate that the Government and the Conservative party have won the intellectual argument. Clearly they are now finding it difficult to make any points of substance against this perfectly sensible provision. The Opposition have to make it clear to the country exactly where they stand on private medicine.

6.15 pm

If one in 10 people now benefit from private medical insurance schemes, and if whole groups of employees throughout the country benefit from private medical schemes, what do the Opposition intend to do for them? Do they intend to revert to the position under Barbara Castle, when private medical health care was forced out of the National Health Service and consequently a number of private hospitals were set up so that the benefits of that did not go to the National Health Service? What is intended? There is no doubt that private medical care makes a considerable contribution to health care in Britain. It relieves pressure on the National Health Service and increases scope for co-operation between the National Health Service and the independent sector.

Dr. Moonie: What evidence is there of that?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman asks what evidence there is for private medicine relieving pressure on the National Health Service. I am not sure where he goes, but certainly in Oxfordshire a considerable amount of screening is carried out by the independent sector which, by definition, relieves pressure on the National Health Service. If my constituent, Mrs. Jones, can be screened privately more quickly than she could by the National

Health Service, and consequently the National Health Service can fulfil its screening targets much more quickly, that will have relieved pressure on the National Health Service. If the Opposition cannot grasp that or understand how the private sector can contribute to enhancing standards in the National Health Service, I weep, as clearly they have a total lack of understanding of how the National Health Service operates.

Dr. Moonie: Will the hon. Gentleman explain the possible economic benefit to a country with a public health service to spend four times as much on providing the service privately? Is he aware of the least-cost approach to analysing expenditure? How can he possibly justify spending that amount of money?

Mr. Baldry: That intervention begs a number of questions. It begs the question whether the National Health Service inviting the private sector to work for it costs four times as much. Often, taking into account all the costs, the independent sector is cheaper. That is one reason why the National Health Service and district authorities have been inspired and have the incentive to look to the independent sector. The independent sector can often deliver services such as screening and ancillary services more cost-effectively than the National Health Service can.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is irrefutable that the major pressure on the Health Service is the growing number of elderly people, who, quite rightly, turn to the National Health Service? Many of the people who will benefit by the provision will already use private medicine, and because of the withdrawal of tax benefits through their firm will automatically have to turn to the National Health Service when they retire. They will be new patients for the National Health Service; therefore, the provision would be of great benefit in reducing pressure on the Health Service.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend is right. It is incredible that the Opposition find it so difficult to understand that point. Of course, all the money that comes into the independent sector of private medicine is——

Dr. Moonie: It is wasted.

Mr. Baldry: It is not wasted. It is extra money for health services in this country as a whole. This year, in Oxfordshire alone, £2·5 million extra is going into the Health Service because of private medicine by way of fees to Oxfordshire district health authority. In addition to those direct contributions there is the money that the National Health Service saves because people who might otherwise go into NHS hospitals are treated by private or independent hospitals elsewhere. The private sector's contribution to health care overall is considerable.

I understand that the Opposition are saying that they do not believe that there is a place for private medicine or independent health care. I hope that they will explain that clearly throughout the land, so that each district health authority can note the impact that that would have on their financing. Taking just competitive tendering and private health care in my district health authority, it is the equivalent of 96 consultant posts.

Dr. Moonie: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way to me again. I appreciate that I have intervened twice already. He has twice mentioned the method of tendering and the money coming from private medicine. Is he aware that the money raised from competitive tendering is taken into account and that the Government have calculated the extra money that the health board should get in the following financial year? Surely the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that the £2·5 million to provide private medical treatment all goes in as extra money. That would be nonsense. About 95 per cent. goes into the costs of administration and the treatment of that group of patients.

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman is wrong about competitive tendering. On occasions too numerous to particularise, Secretaries of State for Health have made it clear that the moneys raised by district health authorities and saved by competitive tendering redound to their credit. That has certainly happened in Oxfordshire and in every other district health authority. The money raised by private health care—£2·5 million in Oxfordshire this year—is money that would otherwise not go into the district health authority's coffers. If one removes the potential for the district health authority to treat private patients, that £2·5 million will no longer go into those coffers.

We have demonstrated beyond peradventure two points about the Opposition. First, they have no intellectual arguments with which they can challenge this sensible provision. Their general hilarity and levity are testimony to the fact that they have run out of sound arguments. Secondly, the Opposition have a continuing and inherent antipathy towards private medicine. Much of their opposition to these provisions, such as it is, is born of their opposition to private health care. They do not understand that, despite their protestations, there is already a growing partnership between the NHS and the independent sector. Through our reforms, that partnership will open up further opportunities for the public and private sectors to work together to provide services for each other, sharing the use and spreading the cost of expensive hospital facilities. That will redound to the benefit of NHS patients and health care as a whole.

I hope that the House will pass these provisions, which will enable those who have had medical insurance until retirement to continue with it into pensionable age. I am sure that in five or six years' time we will see that they are continuing to be of considerable benefit to health care.

Mr. Worthington: The provision to which new clause 4 responds is part of the Government's long-term consistent attack on the Health Service. Conservative Members have made several interventions, saying that it is not the Government's intention to attack or undermine the NHS, but we cannot take consolation from that. We know that the Prime Minister takes her principal intellectual support in the Tory party from those who believe that Socialism should be driven out of this country, and the NHS is the prime example of successful Socialism.

Some Conservative Members do not believe in the post-war consensus that part of the rights of citizenship should be access to the best possible health care, regardless of issues such as class, income, age, gender or ethnic origin. We want to defend that belief. This provision, giving tax relief for private medical insurance, is but a small part of the larger attack that is being mounted against the NHS. The NHS should give us a universal right to a comprehensive range of services of the best quality.

There is a fundamental division between the Opposition and the Government. Why would people invest in a

[Mr. Worthington]

private medical sector unless it were better? There are no grounds for selling a private medical service unless it is better. Imagine going to a consultant who said, "On the one hand, you can have an operation on the NHS and it will be available in two weeks. On the other, we can offer you an operation in the private sector and it will be available in six months' time." Would people like to have that service in six months' time? Of course not. The success of the private health market depends on being able to offer something better—especially reduced waiting times—than the NHS.

It is clear that the Government are stimulating the private health sector so that the comparisons between it and the NHS become increasingly invidious. The intellectual justification for the NHS will become increasingly weaker and people will withdraw their support from it.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that in some cases—I can cite cases in my constituency—the delay time for certain disciplines is identical in the NHS and the private sector, but the advantage for the person who buys private treatment is that he can specify the date more precisely? For those who need a precise date, it may be worth paying the money.

Mr. Worthington: I have no alternative but to accept the hon. Gentleman's assurance. If that were the normal pattern of relationships between the private sector and the NHS, the prospect for private medicine would be grim. That is not the position. There are long waiting lists for some NHS operations.

Let us nail one myth. We are not talking about two separate services—a private sector and a National Health Service—but about services that are intertwined. A consultant may operate on a patient in the NHS or the private sector. National Health Service premises provide the opportunity for the private sector to lay out its market stall so that the private consultant can say that if one stays with the NHS the wait will be six months, but if one goes into the private sector the wait will be two weeks. It is strange that an employee of the NHS can increase his income by being able to sell his private services on NHS time.

6.30 pm

Mr. Couchman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He is more gracious than I was to him.

Is the hon. Gentleman deprecating the fact that some NHS doctors who are not contracted full time to the NHS operate outside the NHS in private hospitals? Has he chapter and verse of anyone who has had a six-month wait for an operation on the NHS, but has been offered an operation tomorrow if he goes into a private hospital?

Mr. Worthington: Every hon. Member has chapter and verse on that because constituents constantly come to our surgeries—a fortunate use of the word in this case—and tell us what has happened to, for example, their children. I can give an example of the condition of glue ear. The consultant said that he could deal with the case within a fortnight if the child became a private patient, but that he regretted to say that if the child simply went on the NHS list there would be a wait of several months. If there is a single hon. Member who cannot give chapter and verse on that constantly occurring, he is not in touch with his constituency, because such cases happen repeatedly. In effect, one goes to see an NHS consultant sitting at an NHS desk, who can sell another product while being employed by the NHS. It is a strange relationship in which one's primary loyalty is not to one's major employer.

Undoubtedly, the major inspiration for this provision came from the Prime Minister, and I cannot see Treasury Ministers denying that. The Prime Minister is ignoring one of her basic principles—that one should not fiddle the market place to subsidise private industry. The Opposition have asked frequently for help for firms in particular constituencies, but hon. Members are told that the Government will not support lame ducks or subsidise firms that cannot stand up in the market place. Yet now it seems to be acceptable for public money to be used to support private health care.

I want to ask a question which will be asked by many others who will be paying, even if only in a small way, extra taxes because of this concession. Why should I? What are the principles by which those people who choose not to have private insurance or who cannot afford to do so have to subsidise this tax concession? Why has this tax concession been singled out? We all know that many people pay taxes and, as their income increases, lose benefits. In effect, they are being taxed at 80 per cent. They should be a priority. One would also have thought that the priority was to strengthen the NHS, but the Government say, "No, this concession is the priority." They say that this is how they want to use our money. How can that be justified?

Mr. Hind: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that if there is tax relief of 25 per cent., or of 40 per cent. for elderly people, for every £25 in tax relief, the pensioners themselves are paying £75? That £75 would not be put into health care. What would happen is that the state would have merely the £25. We are increasing the volume of the gross national product going into health care. That must be a good thing.

Mr. Worthington: I am afraid that I did not hear the hon. Gentleman's entire point because a more urgent message arrived in the middle of his contribution. I hope that I can deal with his point in the remainder of my speech.

The essential point is whether the private sector strengthens the NHS. The Government and Conservative Members say that it does. If that is so, why do they not commission research to see whether the relationship between the NHS and the private sector is complementary or parasitic? I can tell Conservative Members that the Government have commissioned such research. I asked whether they had and I received a reply that they had commissioned research from the university of Sheffield. Because of the lack of time I must go through the conclusions quickly, but the study shows that, in terms of doctors and nurses, any further expansion of the private health sector will be achieved only by arresting or reversing the development of the NHS. It states that, with the present level of private activity,

> "It is difficult to see how in the short term private sector activity could increase further without NHS consultants doing more work outside the normal working week, which may have consequences for the cost of treatment, or without many full time consultants switching to part time work, thereby reducing their NHS caseload."

The nursing pool is finite and will be under great pressure in the future.

I do not have time to quote the research in full, but if the Minister wants to look at it, he will see that it is clear that further expansion of the private health care sector will be damaging to the NHS. This proposal is part of that damage.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: One of the canons of taxation in which I believe most firmly is that the taxation system should be as simple as possible so that it can be well understood by those who pay tax. I am not normally in favour of increasing the number of tax reliefs available, but I have noted that the White Paper on public expenditure said that tax reliefs can be justified on two grounds—first, encouraging savings and home ownership and, secondly, encouraging enterprise and training to make the economy more efficient. I believe that there should be a third category for which tax relief should be available as a matter of public policy; to increase personal responsibility and encourage people to look after themselves as much as possible. It can be allied with the principle of tax relief for home ownership. It is, in itself, a good principle that people should own their homes and look after themselves as much as possible.

That category applies also to private health insurance. It is a basic principle that it should be public policy to encourage people to help themselves as much as possible, especially when they reach an age at which they would normally find it more difficult to help themselves.

I also believe that tax relief for those aged 60 and over is important because it extends their range of choice. That is a vital argument in its favour. I do not like the idea, regularly expressed by Opposition Members, that we must restrict choice and prevent the staff from working in the private sector and patients from having an alternative to state-provided medicine.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bennett: I am sorry, but the winding-up speeches are about to start and I have only a few minutes in which to speak.

Thirdly, I believe that those who help themselves by paying twice should enjoy some form of relief to compensate them for the fact that they are not only paying for the state-provided service but are providing for themselves in the private service. As my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) said, by encouraging people to take up this tax relief we shall increase the total amount available for Health Service spending. We can increase the total amount spent on health not only by increasing the contribution to the state sector, but by increasing the total sum available to the private sector. We must take advantage of that opportunity. Other countries in Europe do not spend much more on the state sector but they do spend much more on private sector health insurance.

Fourthly, those who use private facilities are thus relieving the National Health Service of demand, especially in the case of operations such as hip replacements which are of special benefit to the elderly. If hip operations are performed in the private sector, the National Health Service can concentrate on the more technically difficult operations. That will remove much of the day-to-day surgery from the NHS. The proposal would also increase co-operation between the private and nationalised sectors of the Health Service, and that is important.

Even with tax relief, those who pay for private insurance are still making a contribution on top of the contribution that they make as taxpayers. We should remember that. It is depressing that the Opposition should talk about handouts and giveaways and that they should fail to recognise that we are talking about relief on money that people have already earned and on which they have paid tax. The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) could not define what he meant by super super rich, super rich, rich or even poor when I asked him to do so.

Finally, it is rather depressing that the Liberal party, which has such a long tradition of pluralism and has long believed that people should have a choice and that there should be a private sector, have now reached the point at which they believe that people should not be able to choose the private sector and that the state must control the entire Health Service provision. No wonder that, having abandoned their philosophy, the Liberals have now abandoned their name.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Because of the pressure of time, I have had to throw away the speech that I intended to make. Instead, I shall rely on the words of the Financial Secretary himself, who last night advanced the most cogent argument against the tax allowance for private medical insurance. Last night, of course, the right hon. Gentleman was arguing against a tax allowance in respect of children. So persuaded was I by his argument that I refrained from voting, although I understood and sympathised with the motives of those who argued the case for new clause 23.

The Financial Secretary's arguments on that occasion are entirely applicable to this tax relief—perhaps even more so. The Financial Secretary will correct me if I misquote him. I was so struck by what he said that I took the trouble of writing it down. In rejecting the case for the new clause, he said:

> "Governments have to choose in a world of limited resources. The Government were right to decide to deploy resources more to help families in greatest need."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1989; Vol. 156.]

If that is true, this tax allowance is certainly not an example of the Government deploying resources to the people in greatest need.

6.45 pm

The Financial Secretary said that he was concerned to do something for people at the bottom end of the scale. If that is the Government's objective, they will certainly not achieve it through this tax relief. Most strikingly, the Financial Secretary rejected a child tax allowance because he said that it would be of no help to the 25 per cent. of families who did not pay tax. How, then, can the right hon. Gentleman justify a tax allowance that will be of no help to the two thirds of pensioners who pay no income tax? His argument is entirely inconsistent.

The Financial Secretary concluded his attack on new clause 23 by describing in some detail how such an allowance would be terribly regressive in its impact. He said that those paying tax at the higher rate would gain much more than those paying at the basic rate. That would also be true of the allowance that the Government are trying to push through. The Financial Secretary said that

[Mr. Calum Macdonald]

such a regressive allowance would be difficult to justify, and it seems to me that his words were the epitaph of this allowance.

Mr. Norman Lamont: So far in the course of our proceedings on this year's Finance Bill we have not heard tirades about the super-rich from the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), but tonight he has reverted to form and type, although even when pressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) he refused to say who he thought were the super-rich, except that he thought that they were a few people who had money in the bank. The hon. Gentleman thinks that the super-rich are people who have access to private medical insurance. That means that there are apparently 5½ million super-rich among the working population and 600,000 pensioners who are super-rich. I find it extraordinary that the hon. Member should maintain that this was a tax relief that would benefit only the very well-off.

It is time that the hon. Gentleman forgot about the super-rich. In our final debate on last year's Finance Bill the hon. Gentleman paraded a book called "The Super Rich", which had an art deco cover and was published 50 years ago. The hon. Gentleman's political ideas are no more up to date than his rhetoric.

The hon. Members for Wrexham and for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) seemed wholly unaware that the scheme to encourage elderly people to take out private medical insurance is technically available to non-taxpayers because it operates on the same basis as MIRAS. That is an important point of equity. Of course, we do not expect it to be widely used in that way, but it is an important point of principle and it was quite wrong for Opposition Members to misrepresent the tax relief, which is, indeed, available to non-taxpayers. A more important point, of course, is that we expect no less than 80 per cent. of the beneficiaries of the scheme to be basic rate taxpayers, who can hardly be classed as super-rich.

The main argument advanced by the hon. Member for Wrexham was that the relief was not targeted, but the whole point of the proposal is to generate additional subscriptions. We want to involve more people in private health insurance so that—as my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) said—we can get more resources into health care as a whole, both public and private.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) referred to what I had said about the deadweight effect of the relief that he proposed. Of course, we should not have proposed this tax relief if we thought that it would have a purely deadweight effect in the long term. Although it will have a deadweight cost for a year or two, over time the relief would act as an incentive and would generate more subscriptions and thus bring more resources into health care. That is the whole purpose of the relief —to generate more resources and therefore, as my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) said, to relieve pressure on the National Health Service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury was asked what evidence there is that people using the private sector will relieve pressure on the National Health Service. It seemed a strange question, but my hon. Friend gave a good answer by saying that, by definition, a person who uses the private sector for a certain treatment is not using the National Health Service for that treatment at that moment, and is actually saving and releasing resources that can be used by other people.

The strangest intervention in the debate came from the hon. Member for Berwick-on-Tweed. He said that one of the consequences of this relief would be to add to the pressures on the National Health Service. His reason was that, if people had acute operations or hip operations, they would be in good health—the implication seemed to be that they would live longer—and might require after-care and more attention from the National Health Service. That is a strange argument. It is totally inconsistent with what the hon. Gentleman has always said—that we should put more resources into the National Health Service. That also causes people to live longer and to add to pressure on the Health Service. Apparently, it is legitimate and permissible to live longer if we do it on the National Health Service, but not if we do so in the private sector. That seems to be the hon. Gentleman's argument.

This is a limited and targeted relief. It is targeted to help the elderly and to help people when private health insurance premiums rise. That is the sense in which it is targeted.

Mr. Turner: The Financial Secretary is telling us that this measure is targeted at the elderly. He said that 600,000 elderly people will benefit from it. What about the other 10 million pensioners in this country? In my constituency we are closing down 127 beds. Seriously ill people cannot get into Health Service hospitals. How can we possibly justify spending £40 million or up to £200 million when we are closing beds? Many of the seriously ill people who are not admitted to hospital will be elderly people who are not paying income tax. Again, that is the redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich.

Mr. Lamont: It would, of course, be possible to spend all the money in the public expenditure round each year on the National Health Service. I am quite sure that, even if we did that, hon. Members would say that the demand for medical care in their constituencies was unsatisfied. The demand for medical care is probably infinite. The £40 million represented by this tax relief is 0·2 per cent. of the increase in expenditure in the Health Service this year, and it is 0·15 per cent. of expenditure in the Health Service in total. It really is a small amount of money, and it is a modest tax relief.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West made a good point when he said that, after all, this is a pump-priming exercise. Every £25 that is spent by a basic ratepayer generates £75 of his own money as well. If he is a higher ratepayer, every pound that he gets in tax relief has to be matched by two and a half times that amount of money from his own pocket. As my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West said, this is definitely a way of getting more resources into the Health Service.

Dr. Moonie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: I will not give way. I must get on.

The hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) said that the private sector is more expensive. It is extremely difficult to compare National Health Service costs with private sector costs. I am not sure whether one is comparing like with like. It would be surprising if, to some extent, the private sector did not have higher costs. Insurance companies have administration and marketing costs. The

real comparison is not with an insurance company, with all its overheads, but between a private sector hospital and a National Health Service hospital. If one wanted to make the sort of comparisons that Opposition Members have been making, one should add in more state administration costs such as the cost of administering the collection of taxes, administering the Inland Revenue, Customs and Excise, and so on. Perhaps even the salary of the Government broker in the Department for National Savings should also be added.

The new clause is a wrecking clause. It is designed simply to make the scheme non-operational. We believe in a partnership between the private and public sectors. The modest tax relief in the Bill will help to generate more resources and relieve pressure on the National Health Service, and I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to reject the new clause.

Dr. Marek: We have had a good debate. I am particularly grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) and for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) for making all the pertinent points that the Opposition would wish to make in defending and advocating the new clause.

To some extent, the Government have come clean. The Financial Secretary has at last admitted that private medical insurance is pump priming, that it is not a matter of the subsidy being £40 million. If, as he says, it generates new private money into the Health Service, more and more people will take out medical insurance and more and more people will thereby be given tax handouts. Therefore, the estimated £40 million loss to the Treasury will probably be wide of the mark, and the Opposition's £200 million estimate will be nearer the mark. The Financial Secretary said that it is essentially an open-ended commitment.

The Government cannot have it both ways. They say that the measure will generate more resources for the Health Service, but the Financial Secretary says that all the money in the public expenditure round each year can be spent on the Health Service. There is an inconsistency.

Mr. Norman Lamont *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Marek: The Financial Secretary is shaking his head. In a perfect world in which there is enough money and in which the National Health Service is absolutely provided for, he would be right, but we are not in a perfect world. The National Health Service is desperately short of money.

Conservative Members are not putting more money into the Health Service; they are buying privilege and choice at the expense of others who are not in a position to pay for privilege and choice. That is the essential difference between the Conservative and Labour parties. Of course some people are prepared to pay for that choice. The Government will give them that opportunity, and the Opposition can only table a clause to restrain some of the wilder excesses of the tax advantages that will go to people who do not need them. There is no incentive. It is right for the Financial Secretary to say that 80 per cent. of taxpayers will take advantage of it, but that is because only 2·6 per cent. of pensioners pay at the higher rates. I bet that 80 per cent. of the 2·6 per cent. of higher rate taypayers will also contribute and take advantage of these handouts.

Dr. Moonie: Before my hon. Friend leaves the absurdity of the Financial Secretary's statements, will he comment on the one in which he tried to equate spending on health insurance with spending on health care?

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend makes a valid point, but I am afraid that the time forbids me to develop it.

The issue is clear. Although Conservative Members do not say so, their arguments that are based on more money for the Health Service have an extra facet. People who can take advantage of the provisions are, in effect, saying, "Yes, but we want choice and privilege and a better service than other people who do not have even the possibility of paying for treatment." It is on that basis that we have tabled our new clause, which we commend to the House.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 207, Noes 267.

Division No. 295] **[6.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cleiland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey

Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham

Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexleyheath)*
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. David Maclean.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 14

DISHONOURED CHEQUES

Amendment proposed: No. 57, in page 11, line 11, leave out 'comes into effect' and insert 'is passed'.—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Dr. Marek: I simply say that the next time I shall have to be better at parliamentary draftsmanship.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 16

TIME LIMITS FOR PROCEEDINGS

Amendment made: No. 56, in page 12, line 20, at end add—

'(2A) In section 28(5) of the Vehicles (Excise) Act 1971, for the words "section 147(1)" there shall be substituted the words "section 146A".'—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Clause 21

FUEL AND POWER

Amendment proposed: No. 52, in page 13, line 39, leave out

'not intended for sale by the recipient'.—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 53 to 55.

Dr. Marek: We should perhaps say a little about this amendment, because, again, some congratulations to the Government are in order. They have looked at the problems of the distribution of liquefied petroleum gas that we discussed in Committee and they have made certain changes, which I believe will be considered correct. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) is not in the Chamber.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I am.

7.15 pm

Dr. Marek: I apologise, but I did not see the hon. Gentleman. I wonder whether he could tell us whether he feels that the changes are right. Will they mean that there will be much less administration for small holders and sellers of LPG?

Perhaps the Minister could elaborate a little on amendment No. 55, where it talks about quantities of fewer than 2 tonnes. Is that a realistic limit—too large or too small? I presume that the Government believe that it is about right.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I know that Opposition Members often wish that I were not here, but I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) by being here now.

I thank my hon. Friends on the Front Bench for going so far to meet the concern that I expressed in Committee. I heartily endorse the Government's amendments. I hope, therefore, that the spirit of comradeship which has now broken out in the Labour party will spill over on to this side of the House, and that the hon. Gentleman will find it possible within his breast to compliment the Government, as I do.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) has raised some of the issues that I wished to discuss. It appears that the Government have gone a considerable way to meeting a number of the points raised in Committee. However, I hope that the Minister will say a few words of explanation. Certainly he will recognise—as I have had correspondence with him on this point—that in my constituency a large number of people are dependent on cylinder gas. In particular, one of the community co-operatives on the small island of Papa Westray expressed its concern about the possible damage to business, the adverse effects on cash flow and the general administrative costs. It should be borne in mind that for the domestic consumer liquefied petrolum gas is VAT zero-rated, so there is no net gain to the Treasury when one considers input and output VAT. I would be interested to hear from the Minister whether he believes that the amendments will ease the burden that it is feared will fall on many small retailers, especially those in rural parts of the country.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) for his tribute to the amendment. I pay tribute in turn to my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) for raising the issue so forcefully in Committee and causing us to look again. That has resulted in the amendments, which I believe will meet the two principal objections. The first was that in various parts of the United Kingdom—Ulster, Scotland and especially the west country—a lot of liquefied petroleum gas is distributed by very small distributors in small quantities. Therefore, they are not registered for VAT and they might give up carrying out that useful service if faced with the requirement to register for VAT, even though that would enable them to claim back any VAT on the cylinders. I believe that we have got round that to the satisfaction of the industry by zero-rating consignments of 20 cylinders or fewer. I understand from my discussions with the Liquefied Petroleum Gas Industry Technical Association and others that that meets its concerns about those small distributors, and that it settles that problem.

[Mr. Lilley]

Secondly, there was the question of whether the normal minimum requirement should be in terms of delivery size or tank capacity. Again, after discussions with the industry, I am persuaded that the tank capacity requirement, as a measure of what is a normal delivery to a final consumer, is appropriate. In response to the specific question from the hon. Member for Wrexham, I can tell him that the 2 tonnes mentioned in the amendment was decided after discussion with the industry and meets its requirement. I am glad that that has all-party support.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 53, in page 13, line 42, at end insert

"and either the number of cylinders supplied is 20 or fewer or the gas is not intended for sale by the recipient;".

No. 54, in page 13, line 43, leave out

'not more than 2,500 litres of'.

No. 55, in page 13, line 44, leave out

'where the gas is not contained in cylinders'

and insert

', otherwise than in cylinders, to a person at any premises at which he is not able to store more than two tonnes of such gas;'.—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Clause 37

SCHEDULE E: ASSESSMENT ON RECEIPTS BASIS

Amendment proposed: No. 92, in page 25, line 23, at end insert—

'(2A) Where subsection (1) above applies in the case of emoluments received, or (as the case may be) received in the United Kingdom, after the death of the person who held the office or employment concerned, the charge shall be a charge on his executors or administrators; and accordingly income tax—

(a) shall be assessed and charged on the executors or administrators, and

(b) shall be a debt due from and payable out of the deceased's estate.'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 93 and 94.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): As I understand it, the purpose of Government amendment No. 92 is to clarify what I believe the Committee already thought was the position—that clause 37 is intended to refer to a personal representative's earnings after the taxpayer has died, and that Government amendments Nos. 93 and 94 merely confirm the timing of the implementation of that section. If it does anything more than that, the Financial Secretary should tell us, but that is my understanding.

Sir William Clark: There is still some concern among employers as to the practical effects of the clause. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that consultation with employers will continue to ameliorate any difficulties caused by the new PAYE rules? If difficulties and practical problems are drawn to his attention, will he deal with them in such a way that no additional burden is placed on employers?

Mr. Norman Lamont: I give my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) that assurance. One or two potential problems have been revealed, but on the whole we have taken the view that the problems have been a little exaggerated. Obviously we are open to consultation and we intend to consult. If it is necessary to make changes in the legislation next year to ameliorate matters we shall do that.

The amendment goes further than the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said. It ensures that a charge to tax can be made on earnings received after a taxpayer's death and provides that the tax on such earnings shall be charged on the personal representatives and be a due debt from the estate. The amendment represents an addition, which makes a provision for after death, rather than being an amendment that drafts or clarifies.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 93, in page 27, line 19, at end insert—

'(3) This section shall not apply in the case of emoluments of an office or employment held by a person who died before 6th April 1989.'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Clause 38

SCHEDULE E: UNPAID EMOLUMENTS

Amendment made: No. 94, in page 27, line 36, at end insert—

'(3A) This section shall not apply to emoluments of an office or employment held by a person who died before 6th April 1989.'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Mr. Norman Lamont: I beg to move amendment No. 95, in page 28, line 14, at end insert—

'(8A) In the application of this section to emoluments of an office or employment under or with a person carrying on business as an authorised Lloyd's underwriting agent, the references in subsections (1)(d) and (5)(a) above to 6th April 1991 shall be construed as references to 6th April 1994.

(8B) Subsection (8A) above shall not apply unless the duties of the office or employment relate wholly or mainly to the underwriting agency business.

(8C) The reference in subsection (8A) above to an authorised Lloyd's underwriting agent is to a person permitted by the Council of Lloyd's to act as an underwriting agent at Lloyd's.'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 96 and 97.

Mr. Lamont: This amendment extends, in the case of employees and directors of Lloyd's underwriting agents, the time limit within which a claim for transitional relief must be made to prevent income earned before the introduction of the receipts basis being taxed twice—once when earned before 6 April 1989 and again when received after 5 April 1989. To take account of Lloyd's particular accounting arrangements, the time limit is extended by three years.

The amendment applies the transitional relief that applies to the introduction of the receipts basis to the special accounting requirements of Lloyd's. My hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot), who is no longer present, asked about Lloyd's in Committee. His concern is the subject of a later amendment. This one deals purely with the transitional relief.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 96, in page 28, line 14, at end insert—

'(8D) If in a particular case it appears to the Board reasonable to do so they may direct that subsections (1)(d) and (5)(a) above shall have effect in relation to that case as if for the references to 6th April 1991 or (as the case may be) 6th

April 1994 there were substituted references to such later date as they may specify in the direction.'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Clause 43

SCHEDULE D: COMPUTATION

Amendment made: No. 97, in page 30, line 28, at end insert—

'(5A) In the application of this section to the calculation of a person's profits or gains as an authorised Lloyd's underwriting agent—

(a) the references in subsections (1)(c), (3)(b), (4) and (5)(a) above to nine months shall be construed as references to three years and nine months, and

(b) the reference in subsection (5)(c) above to two years shall be construed as a reference to five years.

(5B) The reference in subsection (5A) above to an authorised Lloyd's underwriting agent is to a person permitted by the Council of Lloyd's to act as an underwriting agent at Lloyd's.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Mr. Norman Lamont: I beg to move amendment No. 98, in page 30, line 28, at end insert—

'(5C) In a case where the period of account mentioned in subsection (1)(a) above begins before 6th April 1989 and ends before 6th April 1990, the references in subsections (1)(c), (3)(b), (4) and (5)(a) above to nine months shall be construed as references to eighteen months.'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 99.

Mr. Lamont: Clause 43 provides that in calculating an employer's profits for tax any remuneration still unpaid nine months after the end of the period of account in which it was earned and for which it was charged should be deducted not for that period but for the period in which it is eventually paid. Clause 44 applies similar provisions to investment and insurance companies. The purpose of the clauses is to ensure that there is not too long a gap between the time at which the employer gets tax relief for the payment of emoluments, and the time at which those emoluments are assessed to tax in the hands of the particular employee under the receipts basis. Without the provisions in the clauses an employer could get a deduction for remuneration which remained unpaid for a long time—perhaps indefinitely.

The new rules apply to calculations of profits for periods ending after 5 April 1989. Since publication of the Bill, representations have suggested that some companies may not be able to adjust their accounting arrangements immediately to determine and therefore pay remuneration within nine months of the end of an accounting period. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clarke) may have been hinting at that. The consequence would be, in the short term, before people could adjust to the new regime, that companies would unexpectedly have to pay more tax because they would not get a deduction for unpaid remuneration, leading to cash flow problems in some cases. Where company accounts were more than 12 months in arrears, and were then brought up to date to satisfy the new rules, there would be a "bunching effect" on the payment of remuneration. That would result from more than one year's remuneration being paid in one tax year so that the company can comply with the nine-month time limit and get its deduction for the remuneration. In that situation some employees could find themselves paying tax at the higher rate where they would not otherwise have done so. To ease any transitional difficulties of this kind and to allow companies which need to change their accounting arrangements a longer period to adjust to the new rules, the amendments provide that for a business's first period of account ending after 5 April 1989, the period during which remuneration must be paid if there is to be a deduction in that period of account is to be 18 months rather than nine months.

The amendment extends the period at the introduction of the new receipts basis to enable companies to get up speed in the preparation of their accounts.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 44

INVESTMENT AND INSURANCE COMPANIES: COMPUTATION

Amendment made: No. 99, in page 31, line 38, at end insert—

'(5A) In a case where the accounting period mentioned in subsection (1)(a) above begins before 6th April 1989 and ends before 6th April 1990, the references in subsections (1)(c), (3)(b), (4) and (5)(a) above to nine months shall be construed as references to eighteen months.'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Clause 84

INTERPRETATION OF SECTIONS 85 TO 89 AND FURTHER PROVISIONS ABOUT INSURANCE COMPANIES

Amendments made: No. 77, in page 64, line 7, leave out from 'as' to 'nothing' and insert

'the provisions of that Schedule do not have effect in relation to sections 434 and 435 of the Taxes Act 1988'.

No. 78, in page 64, line 9, leave out from second 'the' to 'subsection' in line 10 and insert

'fraction of the profits referred to in subsection (6) of section 434 and'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Clause 86

SPREADING OF RELIEF FOR ACQUISITION EXPENSES

Amendment proposed: No. 100, in page 64, line 42, at end add

'other than commissions in respect of industrial life assurance business carried on by the company'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 101, 102 and 103.

Dr. Marek: Congratulations to the Government are in order because they have taken heed of what was said in Committee and of the views expressed on both sides of the House. The Government are now willing to accept the commission expenses of certain life assurances. From reading the amendments I gather that the Government will go a little further and that existing commissions will be safeguarded. Is the insurance industry happy with that, as I suspect that it will mean some extra book-keeping? The amendments mean that people who entered into contracts before the Finance Bill will not have their contract commissions or expectations changed. I welcome that. There are several amendments in this group and I should be grateful if the Financial Secretary would say something about them.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The amendments make two relaxations in the rules which provide for life assurance

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

acquisition expenses to be spread for tax relief purposes over seven years. Both, as the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) said, relate to the treatment of commissions.

The first picks up a point made by the hon. Gentleman in Committee, which had also been put to us by the industry. The Bill provides that all commissions should be treated as acquisition expenses. That is right as a general rule, but the hon. Gentleman had a fair point when he suggested that it might bear somewhat hard on commissions paid to life assurance agents for the regular door-to-door collection of premium, which is a feature of industrial life assurance business. For that reason, we propose that commissions on that type of business should be taken out of the normal rule and treated as acquisition expenses only where they are incurred for the purpose of acquiring business rather than the commissions that are collected each year.

The Bill as it stands applies the spreading of relief to all commissions laid out after the end of this year, to whatever policy they relate. The industry has suggested that this would disrupt the expectations of offices and their existing policy holders because it would apply to future commissions paid in respect of policies already in force on Budget day. We see some force in this and propose that these commissions should not be subject to spreading, except when they relate to subsequent variations of pre-Budget policies.

7.30 pm

The hon. Member for Wrexham asked whether the insurance industry was happy with the amendments. I think that it will be content with the second purpose which I described. As to the first purpose—the treatment of the acquisition expenses of the industrial business—it is right and fair to say that it is satisfied with that. There might have been an argument about whether that treatment should have applied to other home service business, but there is a considerable problem of definition. It is my understanding—I hope that I am not misrepresenting the Association of British Insurers—that, in the end, it was content with that position.

Dr. Marek: I am grateful to the Financial Secretary for that explanation and I am glad that my understanding of the amendments is right. I am prepared to maintain my warm welcome for them.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 101, in page 65, line 6, at end add—

'(1A) The exclusion from paragraph (a) of subsection (1) above of commissions in respect of industrial life assurance busness shall not prevent such commissions constituting expenses of management for the purposes of paragraph (b) or paragraph (c) of that subsection.

(1B) Nothing in subsections (1) and (1A) above applies to commissions (however described) in respect of insurances made before 14th March 1989, but without prejudice to the application of those subsections to any commission attributable to a variation on or after that date in a policy issued in respect of an insurance made before that date; and, for this purpose, the exercise of any rights conferred by a policy shall be regarded as a variation of it.'.

No. 102, in line 8, after 'securing', insert

'on or after 14th March 1989'.

No. 103, in line 9, leave out 'already made' and insert 'issued in respect of an insurance already made (whether before, on or after that date)'.

Clause 171

ABATEMENT OF EXEMPTION WHERE CLAIM SETTLED OUT OF BENEFICIARY'S OWN RESOURCES

Amendment proposed: No. 72, in page 146, line 11, leave out 'one or more'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Dr. Marek: I do not want to delay the Report stage too much on this amendment. It appeared that it might have been a trivial amendment, but I am not sure. Will the Financial Secretary explain it?

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is an absolutely trivial amendment. It corrects a minor drafting defect in clause 171, which defines, in subsection 6, an exempt gift. Although the gift is singular, as presently drafted it is exempt by virtue of "any one or more" of the various inheritance tax exemptions. It can be exempt only under one of the exemption provisions, and the amendment reflects this.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 3

VALUE ADDED TAX: BUILDINGS AND LAND

Mr. Lilley: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 161, line 1 at end insert

'in either or both of the following ways, namely—

(a)'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: Government amendment No. 6.

Amendment No. 107, in line 3, insert—

'(4A) Zero-rating shall also apply for extensions and alterations to village halls and other facilities used similarly in providing social and recreational facilities for a local community.'.

Government amendments Nos. 37, 38 and 42.

Mr. Lilley: As you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will know, in implementing the European Court of Justice ruling, we have throughout sought to minimise the burden, especially on charities. Unfortunately, village halls represented a particular problem. In this context, I should declare a vested interest. I am the son of parents who throughout their lives have been concerned with the local village hall and it would be more than my life was worth if I had not sought every means to try to interpret the ruling in a way that was favourable to village halls.

However, after a considerable scrutiny of last year's court judgment, we reluctantly concluded that it was not permissible to retain zero rating for fuel, power and new construction for village halls and similar charitable community buildings, essentially because, although charitable, they appeared to be engaged in business as they were making supplies and hiring themselves out for a consideration.

A letter of 17 March from Madame Christiane Scrivener, the European Commissioner for tax matters, showed that the Commissioner might entertain a different interpretation of the judgment. I wrote to Madame Scrivener asking for clarification, and gave the Finance Bill Standing Committee an assurance that, if the Commission confirmed that it would not oppose the reinstatement of zero rating, the Government would bring forward any necessary amendments to the Finance Bill.

Madame Scrivener's reply suggested that, although continued zero-rating for supplies of fuel and power to

village halls was ruled out by the court, the Commission would not raise legal objections to retaining the zero rate for the construction of village halls. The amendment therefore seeks to reinstate for the construction of charitable community buildings the zero rate which was abolished on 1 April as a consequence of last year's court judgment.

The amendment is confined to buildings run by charities. It covers church halls, village halls and other community buildings providing similar social and recreational facilities for a local area. It also extends to buildings such as cricket pavilions and changing rooms, constructed for charitable playing fields and recreation ground associations.

The VAT construction clauses of the Finance Bill were brought into effect on 1 April under the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968 and because it is not possible retrospectively to amend the PCTA resolution, the date for the statutory implementation of the relief is 1 August, after Royal Assent for the Bill can be expected to have been received. However, Customs and Excise will waive, extra-statutorily, any tax incurred between 1 April and 1 August on village halls or other buildings covered by the amendment.

I pay tribute to many Committee Members who pressed hard for us to look again and for the Commission to waive any objections which it might have to the continued zero rating of village halls. I do so not least to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), who described what a tremendous effect it would have on his constituency where there are a great many village halls in operation or in the process of being built.

Dr. Marek: Congratulations are once again due to the Government, perhaps somewhat fortuitously. It appears that a letter from Madame Scrivener to a Member of the European Parliament was spotted, and it allowed the Economic Secretary to press home the point.

It was not just the Opposition who pressed the amendments in Committee, but Conservative Members and Liberal Members. I do not think a single hon. Member would have wished VAT to be imposed on village halls. It is extremely pleasant to see such an amendment on Report.

Can the Economic Secretary be more specific about the types of hall that will be exempt? He gave us some help and said that cricket pavilions would be exempt. Will sports halls be exempt? Those sports halls might be built partly by local authority funding, and the community might have a fund and ask for subscriptions to it. Some of these halls, especially if they are big enough to contain a basketball court, may be quite big and expensive. If a big hall did not fit under the heading of a village hall, I presume that it would not fall within the scope of the amendment. Where does the boundary fall? I have not seen the original letter from Madame Scrivener to the European Parliament Member, but I hope—providing the hall was for a community purpose, with sporting recreational or educational facilities—that we would try to make the definition of such a hall as wide as possible. However, that is perhaps a detail, and I am pleased that there was no opposition to this type of amendment. The Government have done well. I wish they could do as well in many other matters about which the Opposition seek to persuade them.

Mr. Beith: I welcome this improvement to the Bill and the extra-statutory concession which the Minister has just announced to make it clear that a period of liability will not arise between the original and the operative date.

As has been said, there was pressure from both sides of the Committee from the Minister to act, in particular that he should write to Madame Scrivener to explore what had been thought and said in the Commission. There is a difference between the approach of this country and most other European countries towards the provision of such facilities. In most other European countries about which I know something, it is general practice for local authorities to provide a large proportion of the community halls, village halls, sports halls and such facilities.

We have a unique and valuable system of voluntary provision of local community halls. It is perhaps at its strongest in the countryside in the form of village halls, but it is not unique to the countryside, because many neighbourhoods in town have a similar provision. It involves voluntary effort and fund raising of the most dedicated kind. Everyone agrees that it would be unreasonable to face that sector with a high tax bill.

That is one reason why I shall tempt the Government to go further, and why I argue that we would be well within the spirit of the concession that we have secured so far if we went further and got extensions of, and repairs to, village halls exempted from VAT and returned to zero rating. A large number of village halls were built a long time ago, so the problems they face are of renewal, repair and extension. Many were built at the end of the first world war as a local community's memorial to its war dead, and some were built at the end of the second world war. Sometimes, these buildings were put up using cheap construction methods because that was all that the community could afford. Many of them now need a great deal of improvement, and some need extension.

The Minister could usefully keep this matter under review and continue his fruitful correspondence with Madame Scrivener. I am sure that he is becoming familiar with her through the letters that they are exchanging. There is no doubt that the correspondence has helped to make it clear that the Commission, in seeking to take legal action, was not aiming its sights at village halls and local community facilities. Perhaps the Minister could go further and suggest a dinner in Brussels between him and the good lady, where, against a background of flowers and music, the matter could be discussed. Much more useful work could be done for the benefit of village halls.

I press on the Minister the value of amendment No. 107. I welcome the Government's inclusion of this provision and the way in which they have secured an understanding from the European Commission that, since what this country provides, through voluntary efforts, in village halls would not be subject to VAT anywhere else in the Community, because there it is mainly provided by local authorities, it is entirely reasonable that it should not be subject to VAT here.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): As my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary said, he was pressed on this point from both sides of the Committee, so when the hon. Members for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said that this was an all-party matter, they were correct. As the member of the Committee who initiated discussions on these matters all

[Mr. William Powell]

those weeks ago, I was hardly aware what I was letting myself in for, because no issue has involved me in more correspondence than this one.

Sir William Clark: It serves you right.

Mr. Powell: As my hon. Friend says, I should keep out of these things, because I would have far less work to do.

What my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary announced last week in answer to a parliamentary question from me was confirmed in his remarks today, and it has been received with real enthusiasm in thousands of communities. It is no exaggeration to say that. This will undoubtedly be one of the most popular results of the Finance Bill.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The result will be received with more than great enthusiasm—it will be received with great relief. Many projects are under way and in planning stage and the burden of VAT if the extra-statutory concession had not been introduced would have been frightening for those who have to do the fund raising. We are grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell).

Mr. Powell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

I never doubted the real determination of my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to ensure that VAT should be zero-rated in the way in which we shall approve tonight. His determination to achieve that was quite obvious and I congratulate him on the tenacity that he has shown in this matter and on his determination to secure a result that has been so widely applauded.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) asked me to clarify the definition further and asked in particular whether it would include sports halls. For those sports halls that are both charities and run for the benefit of the local community, the answer is yes, they will be included, as they come under the general heading of providing recreational facilities.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) inadvertently gave the impression that I wrote to Madame Scrivener only when pressed to do so in Committee. In fact, I had already written and was awaiting a reply. He suggested that I should go further in my familiarity with the lady, but although I am grateful to her for her courtesy, co-operation and pragmatism, I do not think that I should follow all the innuendos that he conveyed.

7.45 pm

The hon. Member is correct to say that village halls are unique to this country, and that there is nothing similar on the continent. Both he and the House may think that it is odd, therefore, that how we tax them should be anything to do with the Community. I am happy that we have managed to achieve a possibly constitutionally bizarre result, whereby we have achieved a national solution rather than a uniform solution that fitted oddly to our unique national characteristics.

Amendment No. 107, tabled by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, would remove the charging of VAT on extensions. I am afraid that, under EC law, that is not possible. Under the sixth directive, to which we assented in 1977, we cannot reintroduce zero rating once it has been given up. We gave up zero rating in that respect in 1984.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) for his kind remarks and his welcome for these measures. I again pay tribute to him and to hon. Members on both sides of the Committee for the tenacity with which they pressed the case of village halls, a case which is dear to us all.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made, No. 6, in page 161, line 2 at end insert

';

(b) as a village hall or similarly in providing social or recreational facilities for a local community.'—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Amendment proposed: No. 7, in page 161, line 39, leave out from beginning to end of line 42.—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Madame Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 8, 33, 39, 49 and 50.

Dr. Marek: I think I understand these amendments, but it would be helpful if the Economic Secretary said something about them. I hope that he will explain the purpose of these amendments so as to confirm that our understanding of them is correct. What will be the effect of the amendments on the difference between beneficial owners and legal owners, and how will that be worked out in practice if the amendments are passed? I am not sure about that and any help would be welcome.

Mr. Lilley: This additional provision is made necessary by an aspect of English land law which does not sit very readily with a tax on supplies such as VAT. The difficulties arise because the interests in land and property can be split into two—the legal estate or interest, and the separate beneficial interest. I am happy to say that there are no such difficulties, I understand, in Scotland, which, in legal matters, so often gets it right. This split gives rise to the possibility of there being two different suppliers for the purposes of VAT every time a property is sold or let.

The problem is compounded by the fact that the owner of the legal estate—whose name appears on the conveyance as the vendor or lessor—is often merely a nominee while the beneficial owner is the person who really instigates the transactions and receives the payments. The practice of separation of the two interests is widespread and I am told that, even when the two interests could be merged into one so as to produce a single supplier for VAT purposes, this would be very onerous and have substantial financial implications for the companies involved.

Therefore, for practical purposes, we have decided to disregard the person in whose name the property is conveyed and to look to the person with the economic interest in the transaction—the beneficial owner. What we have done is to make him the person responsible for the VAT transaction. At the same time, we have made sure that he will also be the person entitled to the benefit of any input tax recovery if his supply of the building is a taxable supply.

This principle is not new to VAT. Since the introduction of the tax, there has been a special provision attached to the zero rating of sales and long lettings of buildings, so that a person constructing them could benefit from the zero rating and cover the tax on materials and services that he bought in, even though another legal person conveyed the property, provided that the benefit of the sale or long letting of the property passed to him. This

measure extends the same principle to the exemption and the taxing of property, either mandatorily or under the option to tax. It seeks to reduce uncertainty in the business community about who is making the supply and who can recover related input tax, and it therefore simplifies the VAT consequences of commercial property transactions.

Dr. Marek: The Economic Secretary appears to have a note in his hands. I do not know whether it is helpful. Has he received any representations from any part of the industry about the effect of the proposals? The amendments appear to be sensible, but having been tabled only two or three days before the debate, it is difficult to assess them and to ascertain whether there will be any consequences that we cannot readily foresee tonight. If the Economic Secretary says that he is not aware of any such consequences, I shall accept that. I do not intend to oppose the amendments.

Mr. Lilley: My discussions with the industry make me pretty confident that this clarification measure will be welcomed. It will deal with a problem that was not catered for in the original drafting. I am sure that it will be well received by the various groups to whom we have spoken, including industry groups and lawyers.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 8, in page 162, line 27, at end insert—

'(4A) Note (5) shall be omitted.'—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Amendment proposed: No. 9, in page 165, line 26, at end insert—

'(2) The Treasury may by order amend Schedule 6A to this Act.'—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this we shall discuss Government amendments Nos. 34, 36, 40 and 41.

Dr. Marek: I must take the Government to task. I understand that the amendments seek to give the Government power by order—admittedly by affirmative resolution—to change aspects of tax law and VAT legislation. If the Government were confident that they had their legislation right, these amendments would not have been tabled. If they had their legislation right, yet still needed to table amendments, I should not be speaking to them because they would probably have gone through on the nod. I suspect that the Government do not have their legislation right. I wonder whether there are sufficient numbers of civil servants in the Treasury dealing with the legislation to ensure that it is right.

The history of all the changes to VAT legislation makes a pretty story. In Committee the Government tabled a great many amendments on a Friday that we had to debate on the following Tuesday. Many hon. Members have to return to their constituencies on a Friday and so were not aware of the amendments. We therefore had to table starred amendments so that we could properly consider the Government's amendments. The Chairman, the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), was not pleased, yet it has happened again on Report. Amendments were tabled on Thursday, appeared on the Amendment Paper on Friday, and have to be debated today.

They are not the easiest of amendments to understand. I am prepared to bet that not many hon. Members, other than the Economic Secretary, can understand their detail. I suspect that the Government have tabled the amendments because, even now, they do not have their legislation right. The Economic Secretary should come clean and admit that; after all, nobody is perfect. If he did so, it would be churlish of us to oppose the amendments.

The Government's practice on this occasion is certainly not a model for good legislation. The Opposition have learnt a lesson from this practice, and I hope that the Government also learn from it. It is an example of how not to conduct business. The Government should not table amendments at the last minute. If they intend to make complicated changes to next year's Finance Bill, they should table amendments at least a week in advance so that we have the opportunity to study them.

Sir William Clark: Hear, hear.

Dr. Marek: The hon. Gentleman and I do not often agree, but I am glad that we do so on this occasion. It is a sensible, non-party point. We need time to study the amendments and to consult outside bodies. If we are given only 48 hours' notice, it is impossible to do justice to the amendments—especially with a Finance Bill as long as this one. It has been impossible to do justice to all the Bill's provisions, although we did quite well in Committee in rather difficult circumstances. I hope that the Economic Secretary will tell us why he has tabled the amendments, although I suspect that I know the answer. If he confirms my suspicions, that will be the end of the matter and I will not oppose the amendments.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members who served on the Committee will recall that the original Bill contained provisions for amendment by order, by the negative procedure, if such an amendment was consequential to amendments made to the zero-rating and exemption schedules of the Value Added Tax Act 1983.

The new schedule 6A deals with some extremely complex and novel provisions—for example, the clawback provision contained in paragraph 1, the option for taxation in paragraphs 2 to 4, the self-supply charge on developers in paragraphs 5 to 7, and we have just dealt with a paragraph on legal and beneficial owners. The original proponents of VAT in this country extolled its virtues as a simple tax. That notion has long since been accepted as wishful thinking. Certainly VAT, as it applies to land and buildings and in the circumstances of this schedule, is extremely difficult.

It would be unrealistic to pretend that everything in schedule 6A will turn out to be perfect and incapable of improvement. We were forced by changes imposed upon us by the Commission to introduce new proposals at short notice. I decided, and I am glad that I did, initially, to introduce them in Committee, thereby giving hon. Members an opportunity to discuss them, and then to introduce further proposals, if necessary, on Report—which we have done, and in time for them to be discussed. It is possible that, in the light of experience, there will be gaps, and ambiguities and adjustments may be necessary. It would be wrong to wait for and then clog up the next Finance Bill with technical amendments.

I commend to the House this series of amendments, which gives the Treasury power to vary the schedule by order. That will usually be by affirmative resolution, other than where the amendment is merely consequential to an order providing relieving amendments to the zero-rating or exemption schedules, which requires only a negative resolution and was included in the original Bill. We are not

[Mr. Lilley]

setting an undesirable precedent because already many things can be done by order, including changes in VAT rates and liability.

I hope that the House will accept my frank admission that we are not quite perfect, but we are getting there.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment proposed: No. 10, in page 166, line 45, leave out 'sub-paragraph (2)' and insert

'sub-paragraphs (2) and (2A) and paragraph 3'.—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to debate Government amendments Nos. 11 to 15.

Amendment No. 2, in page 168, leave out lines 4 to 7.

Government amendment No. 16.

Amendment No. 3, in page 168, line 8, after 'irrevocable', insert

'except where a building is totally demolished or where a major reconstruction occurs on a listed building'.

Government amendments Nos. 17 to 20.

8 pm

Dr. Marek: This large group of amendments merits debate. The two Opposition amendments are not dissimilar to those debated in Committee, and attempt to cover a broad principle. I was not happy with the answers given in Committee as to why the Government inserted into the Bill the phraseology that they did.

Amendment No. 2 concerns buildings that are separated or joined. The Bill refers to buildings joined by covered walkways, and states that buildings, precincts and parades will be regarded as one building for taxation purposes. There is no justification for that view, other than that of simplicity. I hope that the Government will allow developers some leeway in deciding which buildings in parades and shopping centres can be separate and which cannot.

The problem can be overcome because it is not inconceivable that covered walkways could be covered one week and uncovered the next. Successful attempts could be made to present those as separate buildings for the purposes of the Bill. Also, a walkway that is currently uncovered might be covered later. It is in any event a somewhat artificial distinction, because covered walkways are needed in some parts of the country more than in others.

Government amendment No. 16 rectifies the position to a certain extent in respect of agricultural land. It states:

"Where such an election is made in relation to agricultural land (including a building on agricultural land), it shall have effect in relation to any other agricultural land if that other land is not separated from it by—

(a) land which is not agricultural land; or

(b) agricultural land in separate ownership."

The Government presumably received representations from the farming industry and saw the sense of providing a different option for different parcels of land, but they have not gone far enough in applying the same philosophy to shopping centres and precincts.

I do not suggest that landowners or developers should be given the right to dictate to the Treasury which property should be deemed separate, but there must be a little flexibility. I do not believe for one moment that the drafting of the Opposition amendments will be accepted, because they would probably lead to undesirable deficiencies in other parts of the Bill. I am under no illusion that the Economic Secretary will jump up and say, "I am persuaded by the hon. Gentleman's arguments and I accept his amendments." However, I wonder whether he agrees that there should be some flexibility in the interpretation of a single or multiple unit.

Amendment No. 3 would provide another option where a building is totally demolished, save for one facade—*[Interruption.]* Obviously the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) is not interested, but that aspect is of importance to people who are concerned about historical and listed buildings.

Value added tax leaflet 708/2/89 spells out on page 8 the position in respect of demolished buildings, albeit in a different context. It states that demolition is considered total even if there remains a single facade. It would be entirely reasonable to adopt the same definition for the purposes of the Bill. Suppose a staircase inside the building, as well as its facade, is listed. The developer could not then demolish that staircase, and the chances are that the site would not be developed. If the staircase is very fine but is not listed, the developer might say, "There is no question of my being able to exercise a new option unless I can demolish that staircase." That is the nub of the matter.

The danger is that architecture that should be preserved will not be protected unless the Government interpret VAT rules more flexibly. Although one appreciates that demolition must be more or less total, if a building has other features of architectural merit, demolition should still be regarded as total save for those features. That argument is not one that met with much sympathy from the Government in Committee, but I hope that Ministers have considered the arguments, and the slightly different amendments now before the House, and will be able to make an encouraging response.

Mr. Lilley: The group of seven Government amendments can all be described as drafting amendments because they do not represent any changes to our basic policy. The intention has always been that people should opt for buildings, including their sites and curtilage; for agricultural land, including agricultural buildings thereon; and for other land, including land containing civil engineering works. There is no great dissent over those categories.

However, the Law Society in particular was unhappy that the Bill contains ambiguities as to the word "land", which under the Interpretation Act includes buildings. Parliamentary counsel agreed that there was some substance to the Law Society's observation and redrafted to use the term "land" in the Interpretation Act sense, whereby there is no need to distinguish between land and buildings, and to reserve the use of the word "buildings" for cases where it is necessary to refer to buildings as such. The draftsman has therefore defined buildings for the purpose of the option by expressly including site and curtilage. I hope that there will be no difficulty in the House agreeing to the amendments.

As to amendment No. 2, if groups of individual units are in the same ownership and are managed as one coherent development, it seems reasonable that they should be regarded by the landlord as a whole for the purpose of the option. Where separate parts or units are in separate ownership, each legal person has his own option anyway. Similarly, if buildings are linked by a common covered walkway, it is likely to mean that there is some

community of purpose in their use and, if they are in the same ownership, it seems reasonable that they should be subject to a single option. Buildings linked by a covered walkway in separate legal ownership would not be covered by a single option anyway.

The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr Marek) suggested that in some parts of the country covered walkways may not be necessary. If he will tell me what parts of the country they are, I shall spend my holidays there.

We try to maintain unitary operation of the option where there are a number of facilities within a common development because allocation of input tax on common facilities to different shops in a shopping development is difficult.

If all the shops are owned by a single owner who also owns the common facilities, it will be much better for him to make a single option and then to be able to reclaim the VAT on all inputs relating to common facilities as well as to the individual shops. If there is deviation from that principle, more complexity will be introduced, along with a greater opportunity for avoidance and even fraud, and I do not think that Opposition Members would wish to encourage that.

As far as we can see, there is no real problem except in relation to exempt tenants—building societies and banks, for example. An owner might wish to make a different option in respect of premises occupied by building societies and banks from that in respect of shops. Again, I am rather surprised that the Opposition should wish to facilitate tax avoidance by means of those parts of the exempt sector, thus giving rise to the complexities that I have mentioned.

The hon. Member for Wrexham saw a contrast with agricultural land; I find a parallel. I do not know what would happen if two separate estates were joined by covered walkways—as far as I know there is no example of that in the countryside—but where pieces of land are contiguous they are treated as a single unit. Where two estates are clearly separate, they are treated as separate units. That strikes me as similar to the principle that we are using for shopping centres.

Dr. Marek: If a shopping precinct included a right of way—down the middle, let us say—that was dedicated to the local authority and thus not in the ownership, beneficial or otherwise, of the developer, would the precinct be treated as two precincts?

Mr. Lilley: I fear not. As I recall, our definition of agricultural land does not define a farm divided by a road as two separate farms, and it would be equally perverse to apply such a definition to a shopping centre. Although at first sight there may appear to be a problem that the amendment would resolve, I think that on closer inspection it may prove to be a non-problem, which therefore requires no solution.

The hon. Gentleman, along with others, raised the points contained in amendment No. 3 in Committee. Concern was expressed about the conditions of the option to tax commercial and industrial buildings: hon. Members wished to know whether it provided an incentive for total demolition, as opposed to the retention of a feature of architectural merit such as a facade.

If a building is listed or is in a conservation area, planning constraints are likely to prevent such action. It is right that planning constraints rather than a tweaking of the tax laws should constitute the primary way for us to make planning decisions. Even if no such constraints existed, however, I do not believe that the incentive suggested by the hon. Gentleman and the amendment would exist. A considerable amount of tax will be at stake in a redevelopment, whether or not there is total demolition. The presumption, therefore, must be that the redeveloper will want to continue to opt tax in the majority of cases.

In addition, the special charge on developers will, if anything, encourage the retention and refurbishment of existing buildings, because the special self-supply charge —assuming that Government amendment No. 32 is accepted—will not apply to reconstructions, enlargements or extensions of, or the addition of annexes to, existing buildings. Customs and Excise will in any case continue its current practice of regarding a building as new and thus subject to a fresh option, although part of a previous building—such as a single facade—is retained and incorporated within it. Developers, of course, may not always be eager for a building to be regarded as new if as a result the self-supply charge on developers takes effect, or the sale of the building becomes compulsorily taxable. The case for amendment is therefore not compelling.

The hon. Gentleman asked specifically whether, if a staircase or similar internal feature were retained, it could be compatible with demolition. I am reliably informed that it would not be accepted that the building had been demolished if a staircase were retained. Obviously, the best way in which to ensure that staircases of great value are not destroyed is generally to protect them through the planning rules rather than the tax system.

8.15 pm

Dr. Marek: I am not sure that we have progressed any further as a result of the Economic Secretary's reply. Let me deal with his points one by one, although I do not expect him to reply again.

It is doubtful whether Government amendment No. 16 provides a concession; exempt concerns unable to reclaim their input tax may not regard such action as tax avoidance. The amendment provides that

"land shall be taken not to be separated from other land if it is separated from it only by a road, railway, river or something similar".

What if a shopping centre includes a public green, perhaps with a fountain? That hardly constitutes a road, railway or river; a road is, in a sense, one-dimensional, while a green could be described as two-dimensional. The Economic Secretary mentioned farms divided by roads, which he said would be deemed as single units, but what if one part is a mile or two away from the other?

The Minister says that there will be no problems, because land that is separated will be clearly delineated, and no arguments will arise with Customs and Excise. I accept that, although I am still a little worried about the possible problems with shopping centres and arcades. I am prepared to take the hon. Gentleman's word for it if he says that there will be no problems.

I have mixed views on what the Minister said about facades and staircases. At one stage he said that Customs and Excise was prepared to regard a building as being demolished if a facade, for instance, was retained. That led me to believe that the same could apply to two facades, or

[Dr. Marek]

to a facade and a staircase. A minute later, however, the hon. Gentleman said that staircases would not be included.

I am apprehensive. I hope that Customs and Excise will read the report of our debate, and will treat any applications with the utmost flexibility. It is all very well to say that we should use the planning laws to safeguard staircases and facades. I should be the first to agree if the planning laws had teeth, were obeyed and were not overturned on appeal by Conservative Secretaries of State, but unfortunately that is not the case. I am not saying that the planning procedures do not work well, but they do not work well enough.

Having said that, I hope that the Economic Secretary's reply will be read by interested parties in the United Kingdom, and that Customs and Excise, having also read it, will treat any further negotiations with some flexibility.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: *No. 11, in page 166, line 45, leave out*

'has been made under this paragraph in relation to any building or'

and insert

'under this paragraph has effect in relation to any'.

No. 12, in page 167, line 7, at end insert—

'(2A) Sub-paragraph (1) above shall not apply in relation to a grant if—

(a) the grant is made to a registered housing association and the association has given to the grantor a certificate stating that the land is to be used (after any necessary demolition work) for the construction of a building or buildings intended for use as a dwelling or number of dwellings or solely for a relevant residential purpose; or

(b) the grant is made to an individual and the land is to be used for the construction, otherwise than in the course or furtherance of a business carried on by him, of a building intended for use by him as a dwelling.'.

No. 13, in page 167, line 16, leave out

'or building to which the election relates'

and insert

'in relation to which the election has effect'.

No 14, in page 167, line 18, leave out 'or building'.

No. 15, in page 167, line 44, leave out from 'above' to second 'of' in page 168, line 4 and insert

'shall have effect in relation to any land specified, or of a description specified, in the election.

(2A) Where such an election is made in relation to, or to part of, a building (or planned building), it shall have effect in relation to the whole of the building and all the land within its curtilage; and for the purposes.'.

No. 16, in page 168, line 7, at end insert—

'(2B) —Where such an election is made in relation to agricultural land (including a building on agricultural land), it shall have effect in relation to any other agricultural land if that other land is not separated from it by—

(a) land which is not agricultural land; or

(b) agricultural land in separate ownership.

(2C) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (2B) above—

(a) land shall be taken not to be separated from other land if it is separated from it only by a road, railway, river or something similar; and

(b) land is in separate ownership from land in relation to which an election is made if the person by whom the election is made has no interest in, right over or licence to occupy it and, where that person is a body corporate, no relevant associate has any such interest, right or licence.'.

No. 17, in page 168, line 10, leave out

'notification of the election shall be'

and insert

'shall not have effect unless written notification of it is'.

No. 18, in page 168, line 17, after 'above', insert 'and this paragraph'.

No. 19, in page 168, line 18, leave out 'that paragraph' and insert 'paragraph 2 above'.

No. 20, in page 168, line 30, at end insert—

'(6) In paragraph 2 above "registered housing association" means a registered housing association within the meaning of the Housing Association Act 1985 or Part VII of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981.'.—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Amendment proposed: No. 21, in page 169, line 33, leave out from 'period' to 'on' in line 34 and insert

'beginning with the day when the construction of a building or work within sub-paragraph (2) below is first planned and ending ten years after the completion of the building or work'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this, it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 4, in page 169, line 37, after 'supply;', insert

'except where he intends to make a taxable supply under 5(3)(b) below;'.

Government amendments Nos. 22 to 32 and 43 to 48.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Having struggled with the concept of a one-dimensional river, and given the byzantine complexity of many of the clauses, it is appropiate to congratulate the Government on devising a narrow and fairly safe path for most self-developers whose sole lets are to exempt tenants. We are between the devil of the European Commission and its interpretation of article 27 of the 16th directive and the deep blue sea of the need to minimise the effects of VAT on non-domestic construction, in particular the imposition of VAT on building land associated with it.

In retrospect, I am glad that the Commission had reservations about the first scheme that was put before the Committee. It would have required declarations from owners when they were beginning their development as to whether they intended to sell the buildings or tax rents to exempt users. It would have constrained their commercial judgment. It would have meant that they had to fund VAT on land during construction. That is not the case now.

The second scheme, to impose VAT at valuation on land and buildings self-supplied within 10 years of construction, would have hit a number of institutions—in particular, educational institutions that are not exempt from VAT via their charitable status because they take fees. They would have been hit very hard—in particular, the universities that bought land many years ago, possibly many centuries ago, or that were given land or bought it cheaply. VAT would have been charged on the present-day valuation, which would have led to a significant increase in project costs.

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals tells me that the graduate business school at Strathclyde would have faced increased costs amounting to £150,000, which would have led to it not being viable, and that costs on a sports pavilion would have increased by £105,000. The university of Cardiff was concerned that costs of existing capital programmes would increase by £660,000. What is possibly even more important, London university said that the future development on land that was released by the merger of King's college, Chelsea college and Queen Elizabeth college would have been put at risk. That would have been detrimental to the restructuring and to the

greater efficiency and responsiveness of the university sector, which is part of the Government's higher education strategy.

The new historic cost basis valuation will help, and ought to be warmly welcomed. Nevertheless, the new regulations are not a bed of roses, particularly in the education sector. That is why I tabled an amendment that provided for the specific zero rating of education buildings. However, I am told that, under the VAT directive, that is not possible.

The maintained sector of education, which I believe includes city technology colleges and grant-maintained schools, will be zero-rated or will be reimbursed for the VAT that is paid on buildings under clause 20. However, when independent schools undertake projects of more than £100,000, they will pay VAT on construction for the first time. If they buy land for construction, they will pay VAT on that, too. VAT will also be payable on land that universities have recently acquired for restructuring purposes. It will be payable at market cost.

I hope that the Universities Funding Council will distinguish between the different kinds of restructuring to which I have referred and that it will be funded appropriately by the Government. I hope that the Government will continue to press the European Commission on the question of independent schools so as to ensure that non-profit-making independent schools with charitable status are allowed VAT relief on capital building, since that relief is now available to the public sector of education.

Mr. Curry: I congratulate the Government on having teased out a solution with the Commission on yet another issue. The European Court ruling is subject to various interpretations, so it is very difficult to obtain absolutely precise guidance on it. I am pleased that the Government were willing to enter into negotiations. The Commission's willingness to respond pragmatically has also been helpful and perhaps could be described as the acceptable face of Brussels bureaucracy.

I am also pleased that the Government have been willing to err on the side of adventure regarding village halls and the question that is being debated now. They have decided to take a chance, knowing that they are faced with a Commissioner who is likely to adopt a sensible approach.

I have two questions to put to the Minister on Government amendment No. 31. The first relates to a building contract that has been entered into before 21 June 1988, before the date of the court ruling and before the statement was made in the House. Secondly, if the owner of a building has paid the contractor for work, what will happen if he is paid before 1 April but the work does not start until after 1 August? I should be grateful if those two points could be clarified.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) has obviously studied this matter carefully and knows a great deal about it, but we are still receiving representations from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and others expressing considerable anxiety about the matter, despite the Government's efforts to find a fresh solution. I hope that the Minister will clarify the law concerning future gifts and acquisition of land. Would it be, rather like the National Trust, that universities would have to ask for a dowry before they accepted land because of the valuation that would be placed on it if they developed the land?

The universities are being asked to engage in their own fund raising and to finance their own development as much as possible from non-Government sources. Therefore, they are understandably anxious about aspects of the tax regime which may make that more difficult, even after the changes.

Sir William Clark: On Government amendment No. 31, will the Minister confirm that the word "value" means cost price and not market value? Furthermore, where grants are mentioned, does that mean the immediate grant by means of which an interest in the land is acquired and not any previous grants? In other words, will he confirm that the various costs of acquisition will not be added together?

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I have to declare an interest as the consultant partner in a firm of surveyors that may have clients, institutional or otherwise, who may be affected directly or indirectly by the amendments. I am pleased that the amendments have been tabled after the tabling of new clauses that caused some concern to the financial sector when the Bill was considered in Committee. I am also pleased that about 20 minutes or so ago we were told that further amendments may be made by means of order, in the light of experience.

In that context, I wish to raise a technical but very important matter. I accept, as do my hon. Friends the Members for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) and for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), that it is right and proper that VAT should be levied on the historic cost and construction cost of land rather than on the valuation—the residual value of the ultimate development. That is fine in regard to a freehold property, but the position of a leasehold interest is not at all clear. Although the grant of a lease is a supply, a further supply is treated as taking place each time rent is due or paid. As the rent is further consideration for the grant, the fiction appears to be that a grant is made with each rent payment. That appears to be the meaning behind the drafting. Otherwise, the final words referring to consideration in the form of rent would be meaningless.

8.30 pm

If a developer-contractor has a long leasehold interest on a site, its value would include not only the purchase price or the premium paid to acquire it, but the rent payable in the past or in future, apparently without any discount for time. If that is correct, the value of the developer-contractor's interest may equal or even exceed that of the freehold—for example, if he holds a lease at a full rent.

I do not believe that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary intended that when he he said that the self-supply would be based on the land cost. I ask him to consider that it is perhaps reminiscent of development land tax, where the value of a leasehold included the value of the right to receive the rent, although it was only the present-day value. Presumably, in future any developer-contractor who wishes to minimise the impact of the self-supply charge will make sure that he leases the site at a rent which is unascertainable at the time of the self-supply charge.

In practice, the provision may catch only existing land interests and the unwary. I ask my hon. Friend to consider

[Mr. John Heddle]

that, arguably, the provision is not in accordance with the directive, which requires supplies of building land to be taxable, but leasing and lettings to be exempt. By taxing the rents, the measure appears to go beyond the spirit and the letter of the directive. I ask my hon. Friend to consider this and to consult officials in Customs and Excise to find out whether that was the intention of the amendments; if not, perhaps he will be prepared to come back at a later stage with an amendment by order.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): I ask my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to clarify a couple of points, as I was not on the Committee. Am I right in thinking that the main effect of amendment No. 31 will be that land already owned by universities or other institutions will have VAT levied on the historic cost and not on the market value when it is developed? If so, the provisions will be greatly welcomed by universities.

I add to the projects mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) another which would have been in jeopardy as a result of the original proposals. At St. Bartholomew's hospital medical college, a new building is now at the planning stage. It will house a new institute of preventive medicine and has been funded entirely by the private sector. That project would have had to be aborted if there were to be an unanticipated VAT bill, which would have totalled £1·5 million, on the self-supply of land. These concessions are greatly welcome and are extremely important, if I have understood them correctly.

Today I talked to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals; it still has one concern, which I hope my hon. Friend will clarify. We understand the position of land already owned by universities, but how will gifts of land be treated for tax purposes? It would be a great shame if universities had to refuse gifts simply because they could not afford to pay tax on them.

Dr. Marek: We now come to what could be termed the Barclays bank clauses, which will no doubt save Barclays bank about £40 million. I do not say that in any spirit of envy. If the changes were not made, there would have been a general unfairness in other matters. The Government have gone some way towards getting rid of that unfairness, not least of which involves the problem which has beset the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, the problem referred to by the hon. Members for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) and for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). I too have received a sheet of paper from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, and I hope that the Economic Secretary will address that problem. It has been almost completely alleviated, but there are still concerns about future gifts and acquisitions. I am sure that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals will read very carefully what the Economic Secretary says, and any reassurance that he can provide will be very welcome.

For the record, I refer to the debate in Standing Committee, when I asked:

"Will a developer who has developed and intends to sell within three years as a new building, but meanwhile leases, perhaps to exempt tenants, still be unable to recover his inputs, although he will be required to standard rate the building when he sells it?"—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G;* 18 May 1989, c. 139.]

The Economic Secretary said that he would write to me, and he did, saying:

"On the question of self-supplies of new commercial buildings by developers you asked about the position of input tax recovery by developers who intended to sell within three years—a standard-rated supply—but meanwhile let on an exempt rental. In the straightforward case, the letting on an exempt rental would trigger the self-supply charge. All input tax attributable to the self-supply, eg on construction costs and professional fees, would be recoverable as it was incurred during the course of the development. When the standard-rated sale of the building took place at a later stage a proportion of the tax on the self-supply itself would be recoverable—under the proposed capital goods provisions which apply to buildings costing over £250,000 and which are due to come into force from next April. For example, if the building had been let at an exempt rent for two years since it was built and then sold, in principle eight-tenths of the VAT on the self-supply would be recoverable.

I hope that this is clear and has set your mind at rest on these two points."

It has certainly helped a great deal, as there is nothing in the Bill about the possibility of recovering input tax.

Amendment No. 4 was tabled to cover that point. I shall not press it, but for the purposes of the debate is it fair for a building to be let on an exempt rent for a couple of years, with only 80 per cent. of the input recoverable? If the rental was for only a short time—perhaps not two years but only six months or a year before the building was sold—should that short period be completely exempt from the provisions set out in the Economic Secretary's letter to me? I ask the Economic Secretary for a little more elucidation.

Does the Economic Secretary accept the point we made about input supplies if a new building has to be constructed if a fire completely burns it down and a new building has to be constructed and tax would be payable on the building and the land? Although the building had burnt down, the land would still be there. We felt that it was unfair for tax to be paid on the construction and the land; perhaps it would have been fairer if tax had to be paid only on the building. Does Government amendment No. 32 do anything about that? Some helpful explanatory remarks by the Economic Secretary would be greatly appreciated.

Are the amendments in conformity with the sixth VAT directive? Can the Economic Secretary assure the House that they will not result in further infraction proceedings in the European Court? I should have thought that some element of inflation would have to be added to the historic costs, and then the self-supply would be charged on the historic costs plus a little more. There is a danger that the Commission may say that this is not good enough, and other countries may start proceedings. I do not know—*[Interruption.]* I will not tempt them. Time is getting on. I should like the assurance of the Economic Secretary that my fears have no foundation. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman thinks that that is not a problem. In that case, perhaps I should not say more. If he does not spend too much time on my last point, I hope that he will give us an explanation of the others.

Mr. Lilley: We are considering a number of amendments and perhaps it would be helpful if I dealt first with amendment No. 4, to which the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) has referred. The present scheme encourages developers building for letting to opt to tax rents from the beginning of the letting. If they do not, they must account for tax—on the value of the land and construction services—straightaway. The amendment

would bring back the requirement for certificates of intent, which were a feature of the building land scheme originally in the Bill. Although a necessary feature of that scheme, it made for added complexity, and its absence is a welcome simplification to the Bill.

If the developer did not carry out his declared intention of making the taxable sale, he would simply have to account for tax at the end of the three-year period, and then only on the historic value of the land and construction services. There would be no penalty for spurious declaration. Effectively, the developer could delay accounting for tax on the building even though he had no real intention of making a taxable supply of it. It cannot be right to encourage spurious declarations in that way. I hope that the Opposition, having seen that that is probably the unintended consequence of amendment No. 4, will find it unnecessary and unattractive.

Any developer who has to pay the special self-supply charge will be able to recover his inputs on the development—the VAT that he incurs on construction services and materials and any VAT that he may have been charged, under the option, when he acquires the land. There would be complexities over input tax recovery attributable to up to three years of exempt letting before taxable sale of the building. It would be wrong to allow input tax recovery on the construction services and on the purchase of the land if that purchase were taxed under the option when there were, initially at least, to be exempt lettings of the building. As the Bill now stands, there are no such complexities.

The proper mechanism for dealing with the change from exempt lettings to taxable sale lies in the proposed capital goods scheme, which is due to come into force from next April. Draft regulations for this have been published. This scheme will enable a developer who initially pays the special charge to recover a proportion of it if, as a fact, he makes a taxable sale of it, or opts to tax the letting of it, within 10 years.

I must admit that Government amendment No. 23, to delete reconstructions and enlargements of existing buildings from the scope of the self-supply charge, owes more to expediency than to conviction. The Government's decision to alter the basis of the self-supply from open market value to cost, although a useful simplification for most new buildings, introduces complexities in determining the appropriate cost basis for reconstructions and enlargements in respect of the land element of the cost. There are many different circumstances in which works of this type are affected, and it is not clear what is the most appropriate and equitable cost basis.

Certainly, a self-supply charge will be necessary to prevent easy avoidance by leaving minimal elements of an existing building and calling the subsequent development a reconstruction or by abutting a new structure on to an existing one with unnecessary internal access between them, so that it can be claimed that the new structure is an enlargement of the existing one. I have therefore authorised Customs to consult interested bodies to see whether it is possible to establish a consensus on the type of reconstructions or enlargements which should be liable to the self-supply charge and the most equitable basis for assessing the cost. We shall obviously come back to the House when those discussions are complete.

8.45 pm

The central amendments in the group are Government amendments 29 and 31, on which most hon. Members who have spoken have concentrated. I gave the Standing Committee a lengthy explanation of how and why the need for the self-supply charge arose, and I will not weary the House by repeating what I have said. Broadly speaking, the self-supply charge is needed because sales of finished buildings bear tax on their sale value, which obviously includes the value of the land. Building land itself is not taxed. Exempt businesses could therefore avoid VAT on land by developing untaxed land themselves rather than buying completed buildings which bear tax on the selling price, including the inherent land value. All new buildings going into consumption should be taxed; otherwise, there will be avoidance and distortion.

The Commission refused to endorse our original solution to the problem by taxing the self-supply of building land as such. Taxing the self-supply of the finished building was, from our point of view, the second best solution, but it was the only one acceptable to the Commission. I thought it right to introduce amended proposals, compatible with the Commission's objections, as soon as possible in Committee to ensure full discussion and to leave scope for further revision on Report. I regret, as I said at the time, that that gave the Opposition a minimal chance to prepare before the debate in Committee, but I think that they recognise that it has been useful to air the subject before reaching this stage of the Bill.

The amended provisions would have put everyone acquiring new buildings on the same footing, whether they bought the buildings, leased them or built them on their own land. However, the only way to do this was to tax the open market value of the self-supplied buildings. I have received representations that that would place an unreasonable tax burden on institutions which may have to redevelop land they have held for generations or land they may be given at some time in the future. This was not the Government's intention. In addition, the burden of taxation would inevitably depend on somewhat subjective valuations.

We have therefore devised a solution intended to meet the concerns of the institutions affected, including universities, colleges, schools and charities as well as banks and other members of the exempt financial sector. While meeting the Commission's objections to our original proposals on building land, the buildings concerned will now be valued at the historic cost of the land involved, plus the cost of construction.

A number of hon. Members have raised specific points, to which I shall endeavour to respond. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) has apologised to me because he had to leave the Chamber at 8.45 pm. To respond to his point, I should say that "grant" means latest grant of freehold, not the cumulative total as he feared.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) referred to future gifts. Gifts should be valued at historic cost. Therefore, there should be no need for tax arising on the full value of the land that is subsequently built upon. If someone takes the trouble to sell something to another person for a very small sum, that will be the cost basis for VAT purposes, if that person then builds something for self-supply upon it. Let us suppose that a

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generous benefactor gives a university a piece of land for £1. The university would be liable to VAT of 15p on that £1, which would not be crippling.

My hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) asked about the wording of sub-paragraph (2)(b) in Government amendment No. 31, and in particular the reference to

"other than any that are zero-rated".

The objective here is to exclude from the tax base for the self-supply charge any services on which the developer has been charged no tax, either because he pre-paid his contractor before 1 April 1989 for services to be rendered after that date, or because he has been entitled to receive zero-rated services from his contractor if supplied before 21 June 1993 under relief for legally binding obligations. The developer who himself makes a zero-rated supply of his interest in the building because he is entitled to the transitional relief under paragraphs 12(1) or 12(2) of schedule 3 is not in any event caught by the self-supply charge by reason of paragraph 12(6). All supplies which are or have been properly zero-rated are excluded from the cost of construction for the purpose of the self-supply charge. My hon. Friend's concerns are fully met in that respect.

I have already effectively dealt with the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins). My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle), who, in the course of consultations last summer and autumn, made some helpful and thoughtful contributions which were of great benefit to us in framing the legislation, also raised some other points today. We are not compulsorily taxing rent. The self-supply charge is on the finished building, but we are valuing the self supply at land cost plus construction costs. That is the basic framework and we have abandoned the proposal based on the open market value of finished buildings.

The point about future rents payable by leasehold developers is significant. There would be a particular problem where the developer has acquired a leasehold interest in the site for his new building, but on terms that he will pay the freeholder a percentage of the rent that the developer actually receives over the period of the lease. That obligation to pay the freeholder is a cost to the developer, albeit an unquantifiable cost.

Our amendment includes proposals to exclude from the tax value of the self-supply charge rents that cannot be ascertained at the time of the self-supply. However, to leave the tax value on that basis permanently would simply invite developers to undertake all their developments for exempt or partly exempt tenants on a leasehold basis with cost expressed largely or wholly in terms of a percentage of future rents received. I have instructed Customs and Excise, therefore, to consult interested bodies to devise an appropriate solution to this problem. Subject to that qualification, I recommend the amendment to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 22, in page 170, line 8, leave out from beginning to end of line 11 and insert—

'(b) the building or work is not used by him at any time during the period in, or in connection with, making any exempt supplies of goods or services.'.

No. 23, in page 170, line 13, leave out 'paragraphs 6 and 7' and insert 'paragraph 6'.

No. 24, in page 170, line 15, leave out 'constructed' and insert 'constructs'.

No. 25, in page 170, line 16, leave out 'ordered' and insert 'orders'.

No. 26, in page 170, line 17, leave out 'financed' and insert 'finances'.

No. 27, in page 170, line 27, leave out 'paragraphs 6 and 7' and insert 'paragraph 6'.

No. 28, in page 170, line 37, leave out 'land' and insert 'work'.

No. 29, in page 170, line 42, leave out from 'applies' to 'shall' in line 43 and insert

'the interest in, right over or licence to occupy the building or work (or any part of it) held by the developer'.

No. 30, in page 170, line 47, at end insert

'or, if later, of the prescribed accounting period during which the building or work becomes substantially ready for occupation or use.'

No. 31, in page 170, line 48, leave out from beginning to end of page 171, line 5 and insert—

'(2) The supply treated as made by sub-paragraph (1) above shall be taken to be a taxable supply and the value of the supply shall be the aggregate of—

(a) the value of grants relating to the land on which the building or work is constructed made or to be made to the developer, other than any grants to be made for consideration in the form of rent the value of which cannot be ascertained by the developer when the supply is treated as made; and

(b) the value of all the taxable supplies of goods and services, other than any that are zero-rated, made or to be made for or in connection with the construction of the building or work.

(3) Where the value of a supply which, apart from this sub-paragraph, would be treated as made by sub-paragraph (1) above would be less than £100,000, no supply shall be treated as made by that sub-paragraph.'.

No. 32, in page 171, line 6, leave out from beginning to end of line 33.

No. 33, in page 171, line 34, at end insert—

'7A. Where the benefit of the consideration for the grant of an interest in, right over or licence to occupy land accrues to a person but that person is not the person making the grant—

(a) the person to whom the benefit accrues shall for the purposes of this Act be treated as the person making the grant; and

(b) to the extent that any input tax of the person actually making the grant is attributable to the grant it shall be treated as input tax of the person to whom the benefit accrues.'.

No. 34, in page 171, line 39, leave out from beginning to end of line 41.

No. 35, in page 171, line 46, after 'contract', insert

'except that a term of a tenancy or lease shall not be taken to provide that the rule contained in that subsection is not to apply in the case of the tenancy or lease if the term does not refer specifically to value added tax or this section.'.

No. 36, in page 171, line 49, at end insert—

'7A. In section 45(4) (orders etc.) of the Value Added Tax 1983, there shall be added after paragraph (c)—

"(d) an order under section 35A above, except one making only such amendments as are necessary or expedient in consequence of provisions of an order under this Act which—

(i) vary Schedule 5 or Schedule 6 to this Act; but

(ii) are not within paragraph (c) above.".'.

No. 37, in page 172, line 41, after 'to', insert

'sub-paragraphs (1A) and (1B) and'.

No. 38, in page 172, line 43, at end insert—

'(1A) Note 4(b) to Group 8 of Schedule 5 to the Value Added Tax Act 1983 shall have effect in relation to grants, assignments and other supplies made on or after 1st August 1989.'.

No. 39, in page 172, line 43, at end insert—

'(1B) In relation to grants and assignments made on or after 1st April 1989 but before 1st August 1989—

(a) that Group shall have effect as if the Notes to it included a Note in the same terms as Note (1) to that Group as it had effect before the substitution made by paragraph 1 above; and

(b) Group 8A of that Schedule shall have effect as if the Notes to it included a Note in the same terms as Note (5) to that Group as it had effect before the amendments made by paragraph 2 above.'

No. 40, in page 172, line 44, leave out 'and 10' and insert

'7A, 10 and 12(6) and (7)'.

No. 41, in page 172, line 45, leave out

'paragraphs 2 to 7 and 9'

and insert

'section 35A(2) of, and paragraphs 2 to 7A'.

No. 42, in page 172, line 47, leave out

'sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) above'

and insert

'the preceding provisions of this paragraph'.

No. 43, in page 174, line 1, leave out 'to 7' and insert 'and 6'.

No. 44, in page 174, line 2, leave out

'(or substantially reconstructed a protected building)'.

No. 45, in page 174, line 9, leave out 'or 8A'.

No. 46, in page 174, line 11, leave out

'(or substantially reconstructed a protected building)'.

No. 47, in page 174, line 14, leave out

'(or reconstruct) the building or to construct'

and insert 'the building or'.

No. 48, in page 174, line 16, leave out '(or reconstruction)'—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Mr. Heddle: I beg to move amendment No. 105, in page 174, leave out lines 21 to 23 and insert—

'(7) The supplies made pursuant to sub-paragraph (1) above shall be taken to be zero rated supplies for the purpose of sub-paragraph 2(b) above if:

(a) the building was constructed (or reconstructed) pursuant to a legally binding obligation incurred before 21st June 1988; or

(b) the grant referred to in paragraph 5(1)(a) of Schedule 6A is made pursuant to a legally binding obligation incurred before 21st June 1988; or

(c) input tax thereon is attributable to zero-rated supplies.

(8) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (7) above—

(a) a grant shall be treated as made in pursuance of a legally binding obligation incurred before 21 June 1988 if sub-paragraph (c) below applies.

(b) a person shall be treated as having been under a legally binding obligation incurred before 21st June 1988 to construct (or reconstruct) a building or any development of which it forms part if sub-paragraph (c) below applies.

(c) this sub-paragraph applies if—

(i) the person making the grant or assignment or constructing (or reconstructing) the building or any development of which it forms part had before that date arranged (without being legally bound) to make such grant or other supply or carry out such construction or reconstructions; and

(ii) the arrangement was made in writing, or were evidenced by a note or memorandum thereof made in writing before that date; and

(iii) a legally binding obligation to make the grant or other supply or to construct the building (or reconstruct) is on or after 21st June 1988 but before 21st December 1989 entered into by that person.

and any such obligation shall be treated as having been made on the date when the arrangement first came into existence.

(9) If the Commissioners so require, proof of any of the matters specified in subparagraphs (6)(a), (b), (c)(i) or 8(c)(ii) above shall be given to their satisfaction by the production of documents before 21st June 1988.'.

My hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) paid tribute to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary for the way in which he wanted to ensure the minimum impact in practical terms at all times. I associate myself with those remarks and thank my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary for his kind remarks a moment ago. It is a pleasure to be able to endeavour to make some practical contribution to legislation before that legislation is cast into stone. In that spirit, I ask my hon. Friend to consider the amendment and to see whether he can find some way to meet the practical concerns of many contractor-developers, who will be hit by the transitional arrangement if the time limit is not extended.

The amendment's purpose is to extend the proposed VAT transitional relief to the position where, before 1 April 1989, a person has constructed a building, or paid for a new building, and so VAT on the construction costs is recoverable or to the position where, before 21 June last year—the date of the judgment—a person constructing a building or granting or assigning the relevant interest in land had entered into arrangements for carrying out the construction, or for granting or assigning the interest, and where those arrangements subsequently mature into legally binding contracts before 21 December next. The amendment is designed to ensure that the benefit of zero-rating for grants or major interests in new buildings is not clawed back by the self-supply charge and to deal with circumstances that commonly arise.

It is common practice in the development and construction industry that a development project will commence on the basis of letters of intent, heads of agreement or other similar arrangements which, while falling short of creating legally binding obligations, nevertheless form the basis of agreement between the parties which is eventually embodied into formal legal documentation. The amendment adopts a principle and a format used in previous Finance Acts to extend transitional relief on the introduction of tax changes to the situation where the parties are essentially committed to a course of action which, at a later stage, becomes legally binding and legally documented. The amendment in no way alters any previous form, but takes account of the practical effect of agreements entered into in principle which ultimately become enshrined legally, in this case before 21 December next.

The transitional reliefs recognise that where a person had become legally committed to carrying out building work or to constructing a building before the judgment of the European Court on 21 June last, he should not be prejudiced by the changes to VAT on non-domestic construction. Many developer-contractors will rightly take advantage of the transitional reliefs. However, many projects are of such size and complexity that a developer who was, before 21 June last, committed to carrying out a project may not have the benefit of the transitional reliefs. That is because—especially in the case of large-scale developments—formal contract documents are often entered into after a considerable time. The preparation and planning stages may take months—or even years in the case of, for example, the Liverpool Street station complex. Construction frequently commences before legal documentation is finalised. The parties are prepared to

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proceed on the basis of detailed heads of agreement because of the delays caused by the complexity of the legal documentation, which deals with many matters that are not relevant to the principle—the construction of the building—such as subsequent letting and so on.

9 pm

As a result, a number of contractor-developers who became committed to projects before 21 June last and who have incurred substantial expenditure on the projects will not have entered into formal construction contracts by that date or into a legally binding obligation to construct the building. Much of the work will be carried out before the grant of the final detailed planning consent under which the building is constructed. Such contractor-developers will not be able to take advantage of the transitional reliefs enshrined in the Bill. They will have made an appraisal of the viability of their projects on the basis of existing VAT rules and will have entered into commitments on that basis, but will now have to bear an unforeseen additional cost if they are to complete the project. I hope that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will have some sympathy with my view that that unforeseen additional burden may call into question the economic viability of projects committed before the date of the judgment.

Although the introduction of the option to tax will, in many cases, enable the developer to recover the VAT, many major inner-city regeneration schemes will be affected. That is why I feel so strongly about the matter. The Government are wholly commited to the regeneration of our inner cities and it would be a shame if they could not find a way to grant additional transitional relief to ensure that the projects can go ahead, in accordance with our manifesto commitment.

Many of the projects depend for their viability on occupation, at least in part by tenants in the financial or insurance sectors. It is tenants in those sectors who are most likely to acquire space in the larger city developments —precisely the type of developments to which developers who are unable to take advantage of the proposed transitional relief may have become committed before 21 June last.

I realise that, in the longer term, developers who undertake developments aimed at the financial sector will have to face this question, which arises as an inevitable consequence of the European Court's decision. But any developer-contractor who becomes committed to such a development after 21 June will do so having had the opportunity to take the new VAT regime into account. It is only developers who were already committed to a project before 21 June last who will be unfairly prejudiced and to whom I believe additional transitional relief up to 21 December next should be made available.

I accept that the Government must comply with their obligations under Community law. The question whether fresh infraction proceedings would be brought in respect of additional transitional provision is both practical and political. However, assuming that existing transitional provisions are not unacceptable to Mrs. Scrivener and the Commission, it is unlikely that a loosening of the term "legal obligation" without substantially extending the scope of the transitional relief in time or nature would necessarily prove unacceptable.

My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary has heard the broad thrust of my argument before. I hope that, in this context, as a contribution to inner-city regeneration and because so many schemes are entered into under heads of agreement before the confirmaton of legally binding documentation my hon. Friend will find it in his heart to extend the period of transitional relief.

Dr. Marek: I listened with interest to the argument of the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle). There can be no doubt that there has been some rough justice for some companies which had decided on projects that were absolutely certain to go ahead, but for which contracts had not yet been signed by 21 June. The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire said that the Economic Secretary had heard his arguments before. If the Economic Secretary had heard his arguments before and done nothing about them, they must have fallen on stony ground. In my view, it would not be in the interests of good government to listen to them at this stage and amend the Bill accordingly. I suspect that many developers have now realised that the arrangements were not perfect. But the Bill has had its Second Reading and its Committee stage and we are now on Report, quite late in the parliamentary year. I cannot recommend that the Economic Secretary accept the amendment. However, I recommend that the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire put his name down to join the Standing Committee and consider the Finance Bill next year. We would be very pleased to see him. He could advance his arguments in Committee and we could talk about them.

However, the Committee's wish prevailed and many hon. Members regretted that a perfect solution could not be found. The Opposition would support the Economic Secretary if he refused to listen to the arguments put forward by the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire.

Mr. Beith: To proffer support for the official Opposition will immediately flash a red light to the Treasury Bench, and the Government will realise that this must be an important point. I must not criticise the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), for he did me a favour. The Minister will recall that, in Committee, I tabled an amendment on this subject, but, because of the death of a close relative that day, I was unable to be present when the Committee reached it. The hon. Member for Wrexham was kind enough to move the amendment for me. Any lack of conviction on his part was not to his discredit, because he was performing a kind service. I hoped that the act of moving the amendment might persuade him of the merits of the argument, but it obviously has not yet done that.

One of the reasons I wanted the amendment to be accepted and not be withdrawn in Committee and moved for the first time on Report was that I wished Ministers to consider the matter in sufficient time to bring changes on Report. I am disappointed that they have not seen fit to do so. It is not a matter that we can leave aside until next year. It affects decisions that have already been taken and projects that are already in hand. It has about it a rather worrying retrospective character, not because of the Government's original intention but simply because the drafting was not sufficiently wide.

The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire set out some of the problems that arise. I will not go over the ground that he carefully covered, but there are other problems. A

case in Newcastle was brought to my notice. A developer had made his original commitments with the city council, but, because of the changed policy on how things are to be handled on Tyneside, the responsible body became the development corporation. The legally binding contract was subsequently made with the development corporation, which apparently wanted an unencumbered company to make the commitment, and therefore a new company was created by the same people to carry out the same projects. The effect was that the legally binding commitment was too late to benefit from the transitional relief, even though all the other circumstances suggested that the transitional relief was intended for precisely such a case.

The object must surely be not to impose on people tax burdens that they would not have had to accept if they had been aware of what was coming, and, in particular, not to do so in a way that might threaten the viability of a project.

As the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire pointed out, we are dealing with inner-city schemes on which the Government have set considerable importance in their policy for the regeneration of inner cities and, in some cases, schemes which, by their very nature, have a narrow margin of viability. Therefore, it does not make much sense for a substantial tax burden suddenly to be added when a project is well advanced. The principle is clearly recognised by the Government in the presence of transitional relief provisions, but those provisions do not extend to the reality of commitments actually made by developers to local authorities and development corporations for aspects of the work or phases of the scheme that may have already begun.

I am disappointed that Ministers have not followed precedents in statute for commitments other than legally binding commitments. They should have done something about the weakness in provisions that are well intentioned but would have been very much better if they had been drafted to include the sort of cases that the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire and I have tried to bring to their notice.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) has moved a complex amendment. Not surprisingly, there are technical difficulties which mean that I cannot accept it. I will not pursue that point, because there are more substantial reasons why I cannot recommend that hon. Members accept amendments along those lines even if we could overcome the technical problems, and likewise the proposal by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith).

In providing transitional relief, our primary concern was to deal with the problem of construction companies with a legal commitment to build a building, which they had entered into before the court ruling, at a price based on the contract being zero-rated, and which would subsequently find that contract bearing 15 per cent. VAT. Such companies would be legally required to go ahead and complete the building and might be faced with potential bankruptcy. We had to bring in transitional arrangements to deal with that position.

Partly as a result of the persuasive representations of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire, we went further and extended our provisions more widely than had been proposed originally. I hope that we thereby met most of the legal obligations that people had entered into ahead of the court judgment.

However, we did not think it right to provide a relief where no legal obligation had been entered into, but simply an arrangement that might subsequently mature into a legal obligation. Although some such agreements may be precise, others may be vague and it would be difficult to extend the transitional relief without such arrangements becoming open-ended. Indeed, that would be all the more difficult to justify since from mid-December 1988 onwards—once the Advocate General's opinion had been published—developers who had been properly advised were pretty aware that zero-rating was likely to be declared unlawful under the sixth directive. Indeed, over the preceding three years many people had acted on the presumption that that would be the outcome of the case. Therefore, that change was not as difficult to foresee as some tax changes.

There is no precedent in VAT provisions for the sort of proposal that my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire has suggested. Although the development land tax has some similarities with the transitional relief once granted, DLT and VAT are different animals. Development land tax operated at rates of up to 80 per cent. which naturally affected the transitional relief appropriate in those circumstances.

The main relief that we have built into the operation of this tax is the option to tax. That means that any fully taxable tenant will be able to pass on—or rather, reclaim—any VAT that is imposed on his rents, so that it will not stick on him. In turn, the landlord will be able to reclaim the VAT on construction if he opts to tax his rents. The whole thing washes out of the system. It sticks only in the case of exempt and partially exempt tenants, of which there are about 45,000 out of a total of 1·6 million firms registered for VAT. We should not exaggerate the extent to which they dominate new developments and can render them profitable or unprofitable. We have no evidence of any schemes being aborted as a result of any lack of transitional relief in this respect.

Dr. Marek: It would be useful if the Minister could state how much money would be forgone by the Treasury if the amendment were accepted.

Mr. Lilley: Unfortunately, the cost is unquantifiable, but substantial. Because the amount is vague, the arrangement will inevitably be open-ended. There is no evidence that any harm is being done by the absence of such relief, given the extensive reliefs that we already have.

Therefore, although I understand the spirit in which the amendment has been moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire and supported by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, I must recommend the House to reject the amendment.

Mr. Heddle: It may be news to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I failed to satisfy the examiners in the general certificate of education at O-level on four successive occasions. Similarly, I have failed to satisfy the Chairman of the Committee of Selection and to be selected to serve on a Finance Bill Standing Committee on no less than nine successive occasions. Therefore, I suspect that I shall have to disappoint the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) in his kind invitation to join him in smoke-filled rooms in another part of this Palace next year.

I am well aware of the case in Newcastle to which the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) referred. He illustrated very graphically the reason why, in

[Mr. Heddle]

equity and in practical terms, I would have wished my hon. Friend to accept the amendment. Such is my respect for my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury and such is my respect for the fact that he has taken on board a number of proposals that I have made to him informally in the past, so that when he says at that Dispatch Box that he is unable to accept the amendment, even if it were technically correct, I know that his word is as good as his bond. Therefore, with great reluctance, I have no alternative but to beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule 6

Retirement Benefits Schemes

Amendments made: No. 73, in page 194, line 18, leave out '(5) above' and insert '(7) below'.

No. 74, in page 194, line 45, leave out

'prescribed by the Treasury under section 160(5)'

and insert

'applicable for the purposes of section 160'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Schedule 9

Life Policies Etc. Held by Companies

Amendment made: No. 51, in page 210, line 27, at end insert—

'3A.—(1) Section 541 shall be amended as follows.

(2) After subsection (4) there shall be inserted—

"(4A) Where, immediately before the happening of the chargeable event, the rights conferred by a qualifying endowment policy are held as security for a debt owed by a company, then, if—

(a) the conditions in subsection (4B) below are satisfied,

(b) the amount of the debt exceeds the total amount previously paid under the policy by way of premiums, and

(c) the company makes a claim for the purpose within two years after the end of the accounting period in which the chargeable event happens,

this section shall have effect as if the references in subsection (1)(a) and (b) to that total amount were references to the amount of the debt.

(4B) The conditions referred to in subsection (4A) above are—

(a) that, throughout the period beginning with the making of the insurance and ending immediately before the happening of the chargeable event, the rights conferred by the policy have been held as security for a debt owed by the company;

(b) that the capital sum payable under the policy in the event of death during the term of the policy is not less than the amount of the debt when the insurance was made;

(c) that any sum payable under the policy by reason of the chargeable event is applied in repayment of the debt (except to the extent that its amount exceeds the amount of the debt);

(d) that the debt was incurred to defray money applied—

(i) in purchasing an estate or interest in land to be occupied by the company for the purposes of a trade carried on by it, or

(ii) for the purpose of the construction, extension or improvement (but not the repair or maintenance) of buildings which are or are to be so occupied.

(4C) If the amount of the debt is higher immediately before the happening of the chargeable event than it was at some earlier time during the period mentioned in subsection (4B)(a) above, the amount to be taken into account for the purposes of subsection (1) above shall be the lowest amount at which it stood during that period.

(4D) If during the period mentioned in subsection (4B)(a) above the company incurs a debt by borrowing in order to repay another debt, subsections (4B) and (4C) above shall have effect as if, where appropriate, references to either debt included references to the other."

(3) In subsection (5), after paragraph (b) there shall be inserted "and

(c) "qualifying endowment policy" means a policy which is a qualifying policy by virtue of paragraph 2 of Schedule 15;".'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Schedule 11

Deep Gain Securities

Mr. Lilley: I beg to move amendment No. 79, in page 215, line 44, at end insert—

'(2A) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (2) above "redemption" does not include any redemption which may be made before maturity only at the option of the person who issued the security (and no other person).'

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 83 and 84.

Mr. Lilley: The amendment arises from a commitment made by the Government in Committee to ensure that a security is not treated for tax purposes as a deep gain security simply because its terms of issue give the issuer the option to redeem it before its stated maturity.

Such options for the issuer to redeem the bond early —or call options, as they are often known—will usually involve the payment of either a fixed premium or an amount linked to the market value of some other comparable security. The idea is to compensate the lender for the dislocation of his investment and to allow him to invest in an instrument with a yield at least as attractive as the one which is being redeemed early. However, where this premium is great enough to constitute a deep gain —or is not known for certain but could be great enough —the security is classified as a deep gain security. It is then taxed according to the provisions of schedule 11, as currently drafted.

Issuer options of this kind are features of a wide range of bonds, some of which are in other respects deep gain securities but many of which are not, including some convertibles and some straight bonds issued at par or a shallow discount. Such options are outside the control of the investor.

Following the publication of the Finance Bill, we received a number of representations about the nature of such bonds. We came to the conclusion that in this respect the provisions of schedule 11 had been cast too wide and that it would not be right for a bond to be taxed as a deep gain security solely because of its issuer options.

The amendment ensures that options for the issuer to redeem a bond before its stated maturity are disregarded in determining whether it is a deep gain security. This means that a bond will not be a deep gain security for tax purposes if it has no other feature which would make it one. If, on the other hand, it is a deep gain security for some reason other than its issuer options—for example, it is issued at a deep discount and has a variable coupon —it will fall squarely within schedule 11. I hope that that is clear to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 80, in page 215, line 49, leave out 'and' and insert—

'(cc) is not a convertible security, and'.

No. 81, in page 216, line 37, leave out 'or'.

No. 82, in page 216, line 42, at end insert

'or

(e) the security was issued before 9th June 1989 and was quoted in the official list of a recognised stock exchange on 8th June 1989, and under the terms of issue the amount payable on redemption is determined by reference to the movement of a published index of prices of shares quoted in the official list of a recognised stock exchange.'.

No. 83, in page 217, line 12, leave out from 'applied' to 'it' in line 13 and insert

'to determine the amount payable on redemption or to determine interest'.

No. 84, in page 217, line 40, at end insert—

'(8A) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (5) above "redemption" does not include any redemption which may be made before maturity only at the option of the person who issued the security (and no other person).'.

No. 85, in page 217, line 50, at end insert—

'(9A) In a case where the terms of issue contain provision for the amount payable on redemption to be not less than an amount stated in the terms, the provision shall not prevent the fourth condition being fulfilled if—

(a) the security was issued before 9th June 1989, and

(b) the amount stated does not constitute a deep gain (within the meaning given by paragraph 1(8) above).

(9B) In a case where—

(a) the terms of issue contain provision for the amount payable on redemption in any of the qualifying circumstances (set out in sub-paragraph (10) below) to be not less than an amount stated in the terms, and

(b) the security was issued before 9th June 1989,

the provision shall not prevent the fourth condition being fulfilled.'.

No. 86, in page 218, line 1, leave out 'sub-paragraph (7)' and insert

'sub-paragraphs (7) and (9B)'.

No. 87, in page 218, line 9, at end insert—

'(d) the security was issued by a company before 9th June 1989 and a person gains control of the company in pursuance of the acceptance of an offer made by that person to acquire shares in the company.'.

No. 88, in page 218, line 15, at end insert—

'(13) For the purposes of this paragraph "control" (in relation to a company) shall be construed in accordance with section 840 of the Taxes Act 1988.'

No. 89, in page 218, line 15, at end insert—

'Convertible securities

2A.—(1) For the purposes of paragraph 1 above a security is a convertible security if—

(a) it was issued by a company before 9th June 1989,

(b) under the terms of issue it can be converted into or exchanged for share capital in a company (whether or not the company is the one which issued the security), and

(c) the condition set out in sub-paragraph (2) below is fulfilled.

(2) The condition is that—

(a) at some time in the qualifying period the security was quoted in the official list of a recognised stock exchange,

(b) at some time in that period relevant share capital was so quoted, or

(c) each of paragraphs (a) and (b) above is satisfied (though not necessarily as regards the same time).

(3) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (2) above the qualifying period is the period of one month beginning with the day on which the security was issued;

(4) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (2) above relevant share capital is share capital in the company into whose share capital the security can be converted or for whose share capital the security can be exchanged; and relevant share capital need not be share capital into or for which the security can be converted or exchanged.

(5) References in this paragraph to share capital are to share capital by whatever name called.'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Schedule 14

Capital Gains Tax: Gifts Etc.

9.15 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): I beg to move amendment No. 106, in page 237, line 5, at end insert—

'(c) For the purposes of this section, use and occupation of any property by a Scottish partnership shall, notwithstanding section 4(2) of the Partnership Act 1890, be treated as use and occupation of it by partners'.

The amendment has been proposed by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland to which I am an adviser. It is a technical amendment and its purpose will be fairly evident to my hon. Friends.

In the Finance Bill as it stands the holdover relief, which is intended to be availabe to individuals and trustees on the gift of business assets, will be denied to members of Scottish partnerships. In law, under the Partnership Act 1890, the Scottish partnership, unlike an English partnership, is a separate legal person. The amendment will, therefore, ensure that members of a Scottish partnership receive identical treatment to other partners and that the transfer of business property of a partnership by way of gift can benefit from the capital gain being deferred. It does not change the purpose of schedule 14. The problem arises from the 1890 Act. I hope that my amendment will receive a sympathetic response from my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The amendment seeks to preserve capital gains tax gifts relief for business assets used in Scottish partnerships. I am advised that I am able to reassure my hon. Friend that his amendment is unnecessary. Although in partnership law a Scottish partnership is treated as an independent entity, for capital gains tax purposes it is transparent. That follows from specific provisions in section 60 of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979.

Accordingly, gifts relief, like retirement relief, will be available to partners on gifts of business assets used in a Scottish partnership in exactly the same way as for partners in an English partnership.

I shall, of course, study what my hon. Friend has said. If anything causes me to re-examine the advice given to me I shall do so. I am, however, advised as I have told my hon. Friend.

Mr. Stewart: I am extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reassurance. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I beg to move amendment No. 104, in page 237, leave out lines 14 to 18.

The amendment effectively removes the definition of a holding company, a trading company and a trading group. My purpose is to offer the House the opportunity to

[Mr. Michael Colvin]

debate the implications of the Chancellor's proposals in the Bill on capital gains tax holdover relief. At this late hour I doubt that that invitation will receive many takers.

Holdover relief means the postponement of capital gains tax until such time as assets are sold. It was rightly introduced by the Government to avoid double capital taxation through capital transfer tax and capital gains tax and to encourage the creation of wealth. It has worked extremely well.

In 1986, however, the Chancellor abolished capital transfer tax on lifetime gifts and introduced inheritance tax instead to encourage lifetime giving or the passing of one's assets to the next generation. That was a welcome move.

Now the Government seem to be reimposing a tax on lifetime giving as clause 124 repeals the general holdover relief for gifts or disposals made after 14 March 1989, although it retains it for gifts of business, farm and heritage assets; and, of course, gifts between husband and wife will continue to be exempt. The issue was given an airing in Standing Committee and is recorded in column 456 of the *Official Report*. The Government have now brought forward their amendment to allow capital gains tax gifts roll-over relief to be retained for agricultural landlords qualifying for agricultural property relief at 30 per cent. Therefore, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has demonstrated his willingness to consider specific categories of investor. I believe that 51 per cent. family-owned trading companies also join the list of exemptions.

I argue that the Chancellor's list of exemptions is too narrow, but, more important, the arbitrary nature of the holdover reliefs that are left in place is contrary to the declared strategy of our party on taxation. I note that *Butterworth's Handbook* says:

"The restriction of hold-over relief will have a profound effect on estate planning, for it will mean gifts of assets with substantial accrued gains are unattractive. Unless the gift is one of those limited categories where hold-over relief is still available, it will carry the risk that both CGT and IHT will be payable."

I do not know how much revenue the Budget proposal on this issue is likely to raise. I believe that £40 million was mentioned, but perhaps my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will enlighten us when he replies.

With the leave of the House, it is my intention to withdraw my amendment if I can prise out of my right hon. Friend an undertaking to receive representations from individuals and companies, particularly close companies on which the proposal is harsh, and to monitor most closely the effect of his measures so that in next year's Budget the list of exemptions can be widened so as not to deter the creation and retention of wealth.

In essence, the Finance Bill restores the position on capital taxes relief on transfers which existed in the last year of the last Labour Government. A Conservative Finance Act should move away from Socialist measures, not return to them.

Dr. Marek: If the Act restores the position which existed in 1979, the Opposition would say that it was probably a far fairer and more sensible measure. However, we do not want to argue at this stage. Will the Financial Secretary give an estimate of the cost to the Treasury that would be incurred if the amendment was accepted?

Mr. Norman Lamont: I cannot give an estimate of the cost because I am not precisely clear what the amendment is meant to do. It does not have the effect that my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) described.

We have abolished holdover relief because there is no longer a danger of the double charge. As my hon. Friend said, some types of assets still receive holdover relief. I think that he was arguing that that category should be widened. I am prepared, without commitment, to listen to any representations made on that subject.

Mr. Colvin: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 58, in page 239, line 31, after 'sub-paragraph (2),' insert

'the words "at the rate of 50 per cent." shall be omitted, and'.

No. 59, in page 240, line 24, after 'sub-paragraph (2),' insert

'the words "at the rate of 50 per cent." shall be omitted, and'.

No. 60, in page 241, line 2, leave out

'at the rate of 50 per cent.'.

No. 61, in page 241, line 13, leave out '(a)'.

No. 62, in page 241, line 17, leave out '(b)' and insert 'either—

(a)'.

No. 63, in page 241, line 18, leave out '5' and insert '25'.

No. 64, in page 241, line 20, at end insert

'or

(b) the transferor is an individual and, at any time within that period, the company is his family company.'.

No. 65, in page 241, line 36, leave out

'a chargeable gain would accrue'

and insert a 'gain accruing'.

No. 66, in page 241, line 38, at end add

'would be a chargeable gain'.

No. 67, in page 242, line 38, at end insert—

'(cc) by virtue of subsection (4) of section 71 of that Act (accumulation and maintenance trusts) does not constitute an occasion on which inheritance tax is chargeable under that section,'.

No. 68, in page 245, line 15, leave out from beginning to end of line 20.—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Schedule 17

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 49, in page 258, line 18, column 3, at end insert

'and, in Group 8A, Note (5)'.

No. 50, in page 258, line 30, leave out first 'in' and insert 'of Group 6 of Schedule 5 to'.

No. 69, in page 263, line 38, column 3, after '4', insert 'in paragraph 1(2) the words "at the rate of 50 per cent.,".'.

No. 70, in page 263, line 41, column 3, after 'property)'", insert

'in paragraph 3(2) the words "at the rate of 50 per cent.,".'.

No. 71, in page 263, line 46, column 3, at end insert 'Section 96(3)(e) and (4)'.—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

9.28 pm

Mr. Norman Lamont: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

There have been some notable features of this year's Finance Bill and of the debates that we have had, both upstairs and on the Floor of the House. One of these has been the extent to which the Opposition have been able to

agree with some of the purposes of the Bill. Certain provisions, such as that relating to unleaded petrol, have received the support of the Opposition and in other sectors they have shown their broad general approval. For that, I am grateful.

The other feature of the Bill is its length. It is the longest on record. Originally, it was 180 clauses and since then it has been lengthened. Some have criticised the length of the Bill, but I do not think that that criticism is valid. There is a good reason why it is a long Bill and that is that it contains many important and worthwhile measures. In particular, it demonstrates the Government's continuing commitment to tax reform.

The Bill contains important measures affecting pensions, savings and life assurance and some important simplification measures. An important part of the Bill, some 10 per cent., is occupied by measures to encourage employee participation schemes and wider share ownership. I think that these have commanded wide support on both sides of the House. The measure that I would single out for special mention is the new relief for employee share ownership trusts, or ESOPS, in which my hon. Friends the Members for Esher (Mr. Taylor) and for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) have taken a special interest. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) expressed his support and enthusiasm for the concept. This tax relief breaks new ground and we still want to see how it works in practice before considering whether any changes or improvements are needed. Already, there are 9 million shareholders, and I believe that the measures in the Bill will add to them.

Another major part of the Bill makes changes to pensions. A group of these changes has been designed to redress the balance between personal pensions and occupational pensions. Personal pensions are particularly suitable for younger people who are likely to move jobs, and they are the only form of pension savings available to the self-employed. For too long the tax system has put such people at a disadvantage, with the late starter not being able to make sufficient contributions to match the pension offered by final salary schemes. I am particularly pleased that we were able to accept the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), which raises the contribution limit for those aged over 60 to 40 per cent. This will go some way to improving the position of late entrants. Over 3¼ million personal pensions have been taken out, increasing private sector savings and putting the country's long-term finances on a firm footing. The measures in the Bill will ensure that personal pensions continue to flourish.

The ceiling on tax relief for pension saving has been debated thoroughly both inside and outside Parliament. I received many representations about this, and the more that I received, the more convinced I became that our approach is correct. The quid pro quo for getting marginal tax rates down has always been a reduction in tax rates. Generous reliefs were necessary when marginal rates were as high as 98 per cent., but with the generous and large cuts in the top rate of tax, this justification no longer holds. Other savings reliefs are subject to monetary limits. If we are not to create an unwarranted distortion in favour of institutional savings, a similar limit must be applied to pensions.

The cap of £60,000 was deliberately pitched at a level that would minimise disruption to pensions. As few as 50,000 employees have earnings in excess of the limit, and few of them will be affected immediately because of the transitional provisions. We have heard in recent weeks a number of apocalyptic visions from interest groups that should know better. I would merely point out the example of the United States, where they have an earnings cap of $98,000, slightly over £60,000. Curiously, it, too, is indexed to prices.

I have been following with interest the extravagant claims made about the effect of the decision to adopt prices indexation. If earnings grow faster than inflation, it is true that over time the cap will gradually apply to an increasing number of people, but this needs to be kept in perspective. At present only a very few people earn more than £60,000 and, because of the very generous transitional arrangements, the initial impact of the cap will be small.

It is worrying to see experts in the pensions industry —whom I would expect to be good at arithmetic—making the claim that the cap will be eroded in a few years' time to £25,000 or so. This really is a strange claim. The fact is that the real value of the limit will be maintained at £60,000. It will not erode. That £60,000 is a large sum, and it will always be worth £60,000, at least in today's terms. In fact, because of the rounding formula it will move slightly ahead of straight prices indexation. I can conclude only that the National Association of Pension Funds and others have confused themselves with the logic of their attempts to bolster their case which, in any event, is unsustainable.

I find it curious that the pensions movement, which claims to represent several million scheme members, most of whom are on average earnings or below, should come out so strongly in favour of earnings indexation, bearing in mind that many of their member schemes do not even grant prices indexation to pensions, even where schemes have sizeable surpluses. I also recall the resistance of the pensions movement to improvements to such matters as early leavers' benefits, where the Government had to legislate to give ordinary scheme members a fair deal. I therefore find its criticism of the £60,000 cap very unappealing.

The really unsatisfactory feature of pensions provision is the millions of ordinary scheme members who do not receive a pension anywhere near the maximum allowable under the tax rules and those who retire on fixed pensions with no certainty of any cost of living increases and so see their living standards eroded. Moreover, some 10 million people are not covered by occupational schemes. I am forced to conclude that the pensions industry should concentrate its attention on those matters. I remain convinced that our measures are overwhelmingly justified.

The Bill is not just about those saving for retirement; it will also benefit those who have already retired. There are generous increases in the different age allowances and also in the rate at which the age allowance is withdrawn for those with incomes above the incomes limit.

At the beginning of my speech I referred to significant tax reforming measures, one of which is life assurance. Although the details sound, and indeed are, complex, the general approach has been straightforward—applying a lower rate of tax to a broader base, which is the general principle that we have applied to all our tax reforms.

A large part of the Bill—some 30 clauses—is concerned with the recommendations of the Keith report. This legislation brings us close to completing the total implementation of those recommendations. We have brought forward this measure only after the fullest

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

consultation. All along we have stressed the importance of balancing the powers of the Revenue with adequate safeguards for the taxpayers. Because of the care taken to consult the representative bodies and because of the publication of clauses, I feel sure that the balance is right.

The Bill provides relief for private medical insurance, an issue that we again debated today. At times I felt that the 180-clause Bill contained only that one measure. I do not want to overstate its importance at a cost of £40 million, compared with a planned increase of £5 billion in spending on the NHS over this year and next year. The relief will serve a useful role in meeting the higher cost faced by the elderly in paying for medical insurance at the very time when their incomes may be falling.

I have already referred to some of the measures intended to simplify the tax system. One is the repeal of the complex apportionment rules applying to close companies. When we reduced the top rates of tax last year, I felt that it was important to look for areas where we could simplify tax registration legislation. In principle, the apportionment rules applied to several hundred thousand close companies, required 20 pages of legislation and more than 200 pages of guidance for Inland Revenue officials. They have been replaced by much shorter provisions—four pages—which basically deny the benefit of the small companies rate of corporation tax to about 25,000 close companies. It is a simpler approach than the one contained in the Bill as first published, and I feel no need to be apologetic about that. Our proposals achieve the desired objective and represent worthwhile simplification. The measures now in the Bill are better than those that it incorporated when first published.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) persuaded us to drop one measure relating to instruments of variation. His persuasive campaign convinced us that our proposals could be effectively avoided by people having good access to expert advice. However, we shall look to the possibility of introducing a better targeted measure next year.

There was cross-party agreement in Committee that the limits for exempt bingo, where duty is not payable, should be increased. We are grateful to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) for raising that matter, and are pleased that we were able to produce measures that meet with the approval of both sides of the Committee.

Significant changes have also been made to the VAT measures, which my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary explained today. Right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House acknowledged the significance of those steps forward.

The Bill continues the programme of tax reform that has been very successful over the past decade—so successful that it has begun to influence even the Opposition's tax logic. However, as in so many other areas, the Opposition are proving to be somewhat slow and reluctant learners. Instead of accepting the logic of tax reform—that is, that if one rewards enterprise one gets more—they plan to stifle enterprise by restoring marginal rates of tax to levels which, if not confiscatory, would certainly be gratuitously penal.

The Bill is part of our alternative tax strategy that will continue to be followed by this country and its economy. It is the path to increased prosperity and to continuing high living standards. I commend the Bill to the House.

9.42 pm

Mr. Beith: As the Financial Secretary said, features of the Bill command wide support and are welcome. They include the differential on lead-free petrol and extension of personal equity plan schemes—although we did not enjoy the support of Labour Members on that issue, it was one on which the Government and ourselves reached agreement, at least in respect of the proposed changes. The provisions for employee share ownership schemes are also welcome, and we have contributed to public discussion and argument on that subject over the years.

The features of the Bill that we particularly deplore include tax relief for private medical insurance, to which the Finance Secretary has just referred. That represents the diversion of a substantial sum of money that the Health Service could use for direct health care largely for private insurance and to benefit people who already take out such insurance without any tax incentive. We deplore also retrospective features of detailed taxation matters, which at least excited some interest among Conservative Members. The hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) spoke eloquently on that subject, and we join forces with him in criticising the Government for their selective, retrospective legislation.

The Bill is notable for its omissions. It embodies no logical policy on alcohol and tobacco excise duties, despite inflation. Presumably it is Government policy to reduce the price of alcohol and tobacco, and the tax take, over the years. The Bill contains no provisions to deal with the tax anomaly relating to workplace nurseries and to nursery care. Nor is there any commitment, beyond that relating to PEPs, to encourage small savers.

Our most serious criticism is that the Bill is not really a serious piece of tax reform legislation. It does not address the fundamental problems of the relationship between income tax and national insurance. Nor does it resolve this country's capital taxation problems, whereby there is an almost voluntary inheritance tax for the well-advised. The Bill shirks, as the Government have shirked, the major issues of tax reform which, if addressed, could lead to a more just and fair society.

The Bill has been criticised for being overlong, but that is not a reasonable criticism to make of a Bill that deals with such a wide range of matters. However, criticism can be made of the way that the Bill deals with certain technical matters. I refer to the proposals from the Keith committee, which, because they were the subject of extensive discussion, passed very smoothly through the House and did not give rise to any difficulties in Committee.

That was a good way in which to proceed, but it became apparent during consideration of the Bill that the same care was not being taken over other parts. Amendments were tabled at a late stage; a Ways and Means resolution brought us back to the Floor of the House to deal with changes in the Bill; companies and others professionally involved in the legislation were having to make decisions related to the tax regime for the current tax year, while provisions for that regime were being amended daily.

I do not criticise the Government for responding to representations that they received—and, in some cases, dropping clauses from the Bill: for example, they abandoned their proposals on deeds of arrangement for wills. How much better it would be, however, to make such proposals in time to allow proper consultation, and, perhaps, to publish them in a separate technical Finance Bill. I have made that suggestion before: it is one of the ways in which the Government could ensure that structural changes in the tax system—which are bound to be complicated, and some of which the Government are bound to get wrong first time—could be addressed more carefully.

There is no sense in dealing with complex and expensive provisions involving large numbers of employees out in the real world in such a way that unsatisfactory last-minute revisions must be made. These were not proposals that had to be implemented at midnight on Budget day; they could have been brought forward long before.

When I vote against the Government tonight I shall do so not only because I am critical of the Bill, but because the Government have presented it while its members are deeply at odds over the most fundamental issues of economic policy. The Bill is but the window dressing. The Government still do not know their attitude to the major European issues of economic policy. Let me tell them that, for most people, perfecting our relationship with the European Community and establishing our position on the exchange rate mechanism and European economic co-operation are far more important than the details of the Finance Bill. A Government who are so at sea over major economic issues are bound to get the minor details wrong as well.

9.47 pm

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): Apart from one area of significant disagreement, the Bill has been essentially one for the connoisseur, or alternatively the technician. It was a pleasure to serve on the Committee, and I am pleased to commend the Bill to the House.

If I have any substantial criticism other than those already dealt with, it is that in Committee we heard rather too many cliches such as "level playing fields" and "ring fencing". My hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) and I have suggested that they may provide a fruitful source of taxation for the Chancellor in future years if those who use them are mulcted for the pleasure of doing so.

The Bill has been marked by the number of concessions that the Government have made, some—like those on the variation of wills—achieved through the excision of whole clauses. Several are of staggering complexity: I believe that concessions have been made to interests that I represent, but I am unable to understand exactly what they are. Nevertheless, I am grateful for them.

I believe that the Bill has made out a case for increasingly advanced consultation, such as has been carried out on the taxation of life assurance. A case is also beginning to build up for a technical Finance Bill to be presented in the autumn, so that some of the more detailed matters can be taken out. One or two items remain for another day—such as the treatment of forestry—but I am content to rely on the right decision emerging in due course, rather than being rushed into. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will have noted the points that have been made during our debates.

Essentially, the Bill has been one of detail and of fine print. It exemplifies the progress of the Treasury as a stately galleon under more or less full sail, dropping a little in one place and putting on more sail in another.

If we are honest, those of us who participate in the annual voyage on the Standing Committee have enjoyed the process, as we always do. We look forward to further battles of this nature on a subsequent Bill. I have pleasure in commending this one to the House.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: At the beginning of the Committee stage of the Bill I heard a Conservative Member describe something as dull but worthy. At the time I thought that that was a harmless speculation about the future of the Paymaster General. It was not. It was Back-Bench opinion of the Bill—dull but worthy. At our first sitting on 11 May we discovered that that was the Front-Bench view of the Bill, too. The Economic Secretary asked the Committee, "Have I spoken?". When hon. Members said no, he said:

"My words are so unmemorable that I cannot remember what I said."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 11 May 1989; c. 19.]

The Committee stage proceeded at roughly that pitch of excitement, taking the same number of days to complete its Committee stage as did the more controversial Bill that was before us last year.

The Bill has not been characterised by the same high degree of controversy, but it contains a much wider range of measures of varying degrees of importance and contentiousness. From the outset the Labour party had to judge how best the issues were to be approached in Committee. We decided that the principles underlying each Government proposal should be thoroughly explored in Committee and, where necessary, opposed. However, we deliberately did not turn the Committee into the parliamentary equivalent of the battle of the Somme. We wanted to ensure that the clauses were explored in detail and that detailed issues could be considered during the discussion on subsequent clauses.

The fact that the Government's oft-proclaimed radicalism does not leap from the pages of the Finance Bill can be explained more significantly than anywhere else if one looks at clause 28, which sets the rate of income tax. The rate remains unchanged, not because the Government do not believe that it should be reduced further—they are still ideologically committed to increasing indirect taxation and decreasing direct taxation—but because, as with so much else of their ideological Budget, it cannot practically be carried out in the face of the economic storms that currently beset the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This year's standstill is an admission of last year's mistakes. This year's standstill confirms the accuracy of the warnings that the Opposition gave last year. Top rate tax cuts, combined with the liberalisation of credit and substantial pay increases for high earners, way in excess of the national average for pay settlements, has produced a large balance of payments deficit and led to wage inflation.

Equally important, as my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) said when we debated these matters in Committee, the Government's tax changes are socially unjust. They have widened the gap in wealth between the most affluent 10 per cent. of our population and the rest. As my hon. Friend pointed out,

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

it is the poorest who have been hit the hardest, despite the Government's claim that they are targeting help on those who need it most. Perhaps that is what the Government are doing, but let nobody be in any doubt that, when the Government say that they are giving money to those who need it most, their definition of those who need it most is quite different from the one that is applied by the rest of us.

We condemn the economic policies and the social attitudes that form the background to the Bill. However, as the Financial Secretary perfectly fairly pointed out, there are aspects of the Bill that we support. The proposals relating to unleaded petrol, the concessions on the age allowance, and the change in the earnings rule for pensioners are all welcome. Nevertheless, as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said, the needs of our citizens of pensionable age should be addressed by the Government through mechanisms other than just the tax system. I see no sign that the Government intend to do anything of the sort.

Similarly, the implementation of a large number of the recommendations of the Keith committee in the Finance Bill is welcome. What may become known as the Ron Plummer and Roy Tucker memorial clauses deal with the Keith committee's recommendations on tax avoidance. In Committee, there were times when I felt that the heart of the Conservative party was not wholly in the tax avoidance measures. When Conservative Members spoke of standing up for the little people, I had the impression that they were thinking more of the "diddymen" than of small business men in their constituencies. Later in the proceedings, Conservative Back-Bench Members so vigorously defended the democratic and apparently inalienable right of British citizens to have their wills rewritten for tax purposes after they had died that the clause suggesting that that should no longer be allowed was voted out of existence by the Conservative party, despite the fact that the Conservative party was committed to the clause on Second Reading.

That brings me to a rather peculiar phenomenon. I am ashamed to tell the House that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury succeeded in defeating more clauses in the Bill than have the official parliamentary Opposition. It is not surprising that the Chancellor of the Exchequer came up to the Committee to check on the progress of the Bill. Clearly he was checking that the Chief Secretary was getting the Bill through before the Financial Secretary could get more of its contents defeated. I should not be unfair to the Financial Secretary, but I must be a little unfair to him because his craven surrender to the interests of property developers in his climbdown on the close company apportionment proposals was not one of his more heroic parliamentary performances. Nor did he win our admiration with his abject failure to protect the legitimate interests of the Inland Revenue in the argument about inheritance tax and whether dead people should be allowed to rewrite their wills.

As with last year's Finance Bill, the greatest part of the Government's work load was carried by the Financial Secretary. As I said last year, discussing the Finance Bill without the Financial Secretary is like discussing Hamlet without the ham. This year, the Financial Secretary's robust impersonation of the late Tony Hancock impersonating a union leader was enjoyed by the entire Committee when we discussed employee share ownership trusts. His moving speech in favour of workers' control will be remembered by the Opposition for some time. He said:

"If the increasing awareness of and interest in ESOPs results in more worker-owned companies, I should not regret that."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G;* 6 June 1989, c. 304.]

We all cheered him. However, later he let us down. How could the man described by Michael White in *The Guardian* as the perennial bridesmaid be so despondent about his chances of future preferment that yesterday he felt unable to accept our new clause about workplace nurseries?

In legislation often the smaller issues, not the big ones, give the game away. Will the Government be able to reduce the rate of inflation? There is a clue in the Finance Bill. The Bill deletes the phrase "higher paid" from a description of employees who earn £8,500 or more. That shows the direction of the Government's thinking.

Finally, I shall deal with what the Government claim as their stated objective in taxation policy. They say that they have two main objectives: to cut allowances and to reduce the rate of direct taxation. The Bill introduces the much-denounced provision for a new tax relief—the new allowance for private medical insurance for pensioners. The Financial Secretary said that we did not like it and that we had roundly denounced it. He was certainly right about that. He also denounced the fact that the allowance was introduced with all the paraphernalia that it is claimed surround the present MIRAS scheme. That allowance is intended to be bedded into the taxation system, and that is wrong.

Last year the Financial Secretary said that the Finance Bill was a watershed. This year, with its unstated condemnation of last year's watershed, it is bound to be regarded as the Government's dull and worthy tombstone.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 266, Noes 204.

Division No. 298 **at 9.59 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Aitken, Jonathan	Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Alexander, Richard	Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Bowis, John
Allason, Rupert	Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Amery, Rt Hon Julian	Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Amess, David	Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Amos, Alan	Brazier, Julian
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Ashby, David	Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Aspinwall, Jack	Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Atkins, Robert	Burns, Simon
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Burt, Alistair
Baldry, Tony	Butcher, John
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Butler, Chris
Batiste, Spencer	Butterfill, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Bellingham, Henry	Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Bendall, Vivian	Carrington, Matthew
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Carttiss, Michael
Bevan, David Gilroy	Chapman, Sydney
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Chope, Christopher
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Body, Sir Richard	Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Colvin, Michael
Boswell, Tim	Conway, Derek
Bottomley, Peter	Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*

Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*

Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Irradiation of Food

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

10.15 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 10377/88, relating to irradiation of foodstuffs; and supports the Government's intention to seek to ensure that a directive is adopted that will allow the use of the process under conditions that will fully safeguard the interests of the consumer.

I announced in the House on 21 June that the Government intended to provide for the irradiation of some foods in this country. I made it clear then that we regarded this process as a useful additional weapon in our large armoury of measures and activities aimed at ensuring food safety—I stress, only one of many.

That takes me straight to the flaw in the second half of the Opposition's amendment, stating that they believe that "improving regulations and monitoring along the food chain are the best ways of solving the current epidemic of food poisoning".

We monitor constantly. We regularly improve regulations whenever necessary. That happens anyway, but irradiation adds one further benefit—one further improvement in regulations and systems—which is why it is right that we should now make it available.

I said on 21 June that our approach was to extend consumers' freedom of choice by making available for those foods for which it is suitable this extension to the range of preservation processes that can be used to keep food safe.

I emphasised that I was well aware that it is only suitable for some foods and should be available only for them, and that no one in Government had ever claimed or would claim that it could be used across the whole range of food to deal with all forms of microbial contamination. Above all, I underlined that it will be a matter of freedom of choice for the consumer, because there will be full and clear labelling of foods that have received this treatment. No one, whether primary producer, manufacturer, retailer or consumer, will have to use irradiation or eat irradiated food if they do not wish to.

Our whole approach in making available this additional option to the consumer and to the food industry is based fundamentally on food safety and consumer grounds. Tonight we are debating the European Commission's proposals for harmonising the laws on food irradiation across the whole Community—and here again consumer considerations are well to the forefront.

Just as in the United Kingdom, we adopted a cautious attitude to food irradiation, setting up our own independent expert scientific assessment of the process, rather than simply acting on the basis of the international work carried out for the World Health Organisation and the Food and Agriculture Organisation. So too did the European Commission. The considerable data on this subject were re-evaluated by the European Community Scientific Committee for Food before this proposal was put forward.

Like the international committees and the United Kingdom's own independent committee, the European Community committee was entirely satisfied as to the safety and wholesomeness of irradiated food up to the overall average dose of 10 kilogray. The one difference of approach favoured by the European Community Committee has been that it recommended restriction to a particular list of foodstuffs for which a technological need had been demonstrated. Essentially, that meant that it recommended restrictions to those foodstuffs already accepted by one or other of the member states. Our preferred approach—like that of the World Health Organisation—has been to argue that the licence issued to a particular firm should set out the particular foodstuffs and the treatments that could be applied to them. This approach is slightly different from that recommended by the European Community Scientific Committee for Food, but essentially would involve the same degree of official control.

The heart of the directive is in four articles—5 to 8—which contain the essential control conditions. Article 5 makes labelling mandatory. This is an absolute must and we shall see to it in our discussions with our partners that clear and precise requirements are laid down.

Article 6 requires member states to provide for prior approval of applications to use the process and subsequent monitoring of compliance with the conditions by a competent authority. As the House will be aware, we are proposing to exercise this control within central Government. Article 6 also stipulates that approval shall be given only if the plant meets the requirements of the relevant Codex recommended international code of practice, which covers detailed design and operational aspects of the irradiation plant and premises. We have no difficulty with that—we would recommend the same.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): How will a customer in a restaurant know whether the food that is served has been irradiated?

Mr. MacGregor: As I made clear in exchanges in the House the other day, we shall have to include that point when we come to the detailed regulations to ensure that the customer does know.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: In view of the shortness of the debate, it would be better if I did not give way again because I know that many hon. Members wish to speak and my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder) will answer their points when he replies to the debate.

Article 7 lays down detailed documentation requirements and article 8 provides for imports to be permitted only from countries that can demonstrate to the Community that they comply with equivalent conditions and achieve equal standards. The article envisages inspection of irradiation plants in third countries and the listing of officially approved establishments there.

These are the core conditions of the draft directive and, as the House will readily appreciate, they are in line with our recommendations for a control framework for this country and so they clearly form an acceptable basis for the detailed discussions that will be necessary. We shall, of course, examine closely just how the provisions should be applied in practice. I can assure the House therefore that we shall be taking a close look at the criteria to be applied by approving authorities; at the conditions that will be laid down when approvals are granted; at the matters to be examined during official inspections; and at the circumstances in which approvals will be withdrawn or

[Mr. MacGregor]

modified if conditions are found on inspection not to be fully met. We shall also need to look carefully at the record-keeping requirements and at details of the labelling provisions. For imports, we shall need to scrutinise with particular care the Commission's proposals for measuring the equivalence of the controls and the standards of third countries.

In short, we are concerned to get all the arrangements right to ensure that the essential aim of consumer protection is fully met and that there is uniform application of conditions across the whole Community.

Some people no doubt will attempt to argue that consumers have said that they do not want irradiated food on the market. Such market research as has been done so far and which I have seen—it is far from complete—does, indeed, suggest that many consumers will not want to use irradiated food at least in the early stages. That is fair enough; no one has ever suggested they should have to. On the other hand, a sizeable number have also said that they would like the opportunity and wish to make use of it. This is entirely in accord with the Government's approach. Given the proper controls, we see no reason why they should now be denied that opportunity.

Moreover, it is worth remembering what consumer bodies such as the National Consumer Council are saying. The NCC has explicitly accepted the safety of food irradiation properly applied and monitored—as we shall ensure that it is. It has pointed to the need for nutritional monitoring. We have already said that we shall build this into the on-going "food-watch" that we maintain. The NCC statement stresses also that irradiation must form simply one part of a comprehensive approach to the safety of food and must never be regarded as a substitute for good manufacturing practice. My statement in the House last month has already made clear that this is also the firm position of the Government.

I turn now in what is inevitably a short debate to what I regard as the misconceptions and myths which are being raised both about the process itself and about what it can do. It appears that some people still fear that food irradiation will make food radioactive. They are, however, confusing irradiation with fall out of radioactive substances—which is entirely different. Moreover, they overlook the fact that radioactivity is actually present anyway—in the environment, in food, and, indeed, in all of us.

The most graphic rebuttal of the radioactivity argument that I have seen is in the report of the European Community's Scientific Committee for Food to which I referred earlier. The committee referred to studies carried out to show how much radioactivity could be induced by that process. Those studies, which relate to the energy and dose levels that would apply to food irradiation, showed that the amount of radioactivity produced—and I quote from the report—

"is below the detection threshold".

Indeed, that infinitesimal extra amount of radioactivity is, according to the committee, approximately 100,000-fold smaller than the level that occurs naturally in fresh foods. That puts the subject properly in its context and needs to be emphasised time and time again—it is 100,000-fold smaller.

Some comments currently being reported seem also to be based on the mistaken assumption that the process can disguise sub-standard food. Let me emphasise once again that food irradiation cannot reverse the natural ageing processes of food. If the food is sub-standard, it will remain so. Irradiation cannot disguise the natural signs that food has gone off. It will not improve appearance; it will not cover up unpleasant odours; and it cannot take away a nasty taste. The process, in other words, cannot make good food which is bad in those ways.

In any case, the Government are quite clear that food irradiation shall be applied only to food in normal, sound condition. We propose to build into our controls a requirement for checks to be made on the food before it is treated.

Some people claim that irradiation cannot make any contribution to the avoidance of botulism. I simply do not know why that point is being raised, because no one has ever claimed that it could. What we have said is that it had a useful contribution to make by killing large numbers of salmonella, campylobacter and listeria bacteria. That is where the particular effectiveness of food irradiation has been demonstrated, and that is the benefit that we want to make available to consumers. It is also, of course, one of the prime food safety concerns in certain foods. So let us concentrate on the real targets, which are very important ones, and not on false targets for which irradiation is not appropriate in the first place.

There is another aspect, too, on which I want to set the record straight. I have seen several newspaper reports which say that food irradiation will not prove effective in reducing the threat posed by salmonella and campylobacter. In some accounts, that is said to be because the bacteria will leave behind toxins and that those will do the damage. In other accounts, it is stated that those bacteria will produce spores that the process cannot touch and that further bacteria will grow from the spores. I am advised that, quite simply, that is scientific nonsense. Salmonella, campylobacter, and listeria are non-sporing bacteria and they do not excrete toxins into food. The illness that is caused results directly from consuming the bacteria themselves. If the bacteria are killed off, the threat that they pose is eliminated. Helping deal with that, which irradiation does, undoubtedly makes a very worthwhile contribution to the reduction of food-borne illness.

Another odd argument is that the process will not achieve much because it cannot be used to protect eggs. Again no one ever said that it could. But what it can do through its effectiveness in killing bacteria is to enhance safety standards in poultry meat, in some shell-fish and in herbs and spices.Of course, it cannot be used for all foods, but that is no argument for failing to take advantage of it where it can be useful.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. MacGregor: No, I had better move on, because several hon. Members wish to speak.

On the subject of herbs and spices, there is of course a particular advantage to the public in the use of that process. At the moment the decontamination needed by those products—because of the conditions in which they have to be stored in the countries of origin—is by fumigation with ethylene oxide gas. It is essential to replace the use of that chemical because of its possible adverse effects. Its use will be banned within the European Community from the end of 1990. The only effective

alternative for the treatment of herbs and spices is irradiation. Irradiation of herbs and spices thus involves the replacement of a treatment that is causing concern.

Another fallacious objection is that it is wrong to be thinking of introducing the process now, when research has so far not come up with a detection test. I have to say that the heavy weight of informed opinion takes the opposite view. The World Health Organisation, the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the United States Food and Drug Administration—indeed, the Governments of 35 different countries—have concluded, after detailed scientific consideration, that adequate control can be achieved over the use of the process through a strict system of licensing and official inspections of operations and of records. The view of our own independent scientific inquiry by the Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods was that a detection test could provide a useful supplement to the control mechanism, but satisfactory controls could be maintained without this. The Government have accepted this conclusion—though we shall, of course, continue to pursue the research that we are funding with the aim of producing suitable tests.

Import controls are a matter of particular importance in the overall control regime for food irradiation. I can assure the House that we shall support the imposition of strict, Community-wide controls, with detailed documentation and labelling requirements, to give the necessary reassurance to the consumer on the quality of irradiated foodstuffs whether treated here or at approved, officially controlled premises overseas.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): That has not worked thus far.

Mr. MacGregor: I invited the hon. Gentleman to provide me with his evidence on this and I am going through it. He knows that I am doing precisely that. I do not believe that his evidence adds up to the charge that he has just made, but it is up to him to give further evidence, if he thinks that he can find it.

When we have the ban on irradiation lifted in this country, to which I hope the House will agree, and we have suitable controls for certain products and it is Community-wide, the imposition of strict Community-wide controls will be important.

I have spoken of the benefits for consumers in making available the option of food irradiation as an additional measure to protect the safety of those foods for which the process is suitable. I have drawn particular attention to the effectiveness that the process has demonstrated in relation to salmonella, campylobacter, and listeria—those bacteria cause the vast majority of food-borne illness. In the case of salmonella and campylobacter the process could have particular value in being applied to poultrymeat.

I have mentioned also the benefit that consumers would gain from the irradiation of herbs and spices, in relation to which the process would provide a much safer way of achieving insect and bacterial decontamination than the present chemical fumigation methods which will, in any case, shortly no longer be available for use.

There is, of course, further benefit in fruits whose season is longer and which will keep for longer in the home. Extension of shelf-life is usually referred to as a benefit for the retail trade. So it is, no doubt, but we must not forget that larders and kitchens have shelves also. If goods last longer, then this clearly helps the consumer as well. But that is an additional benefit. It is not among my reasons for proposing the lifting of the ban, which are based solely on food safety and consumer choice grounds.

For all those reasons, the Government welcome the Commission's initiative in proposing harmonised rules for food irradiation. As I have stated, the draft directive's proposals for a control system are very largely compatible with the proposals that we had ourselves outlined. Clearly, we shall need to examine in detail the implications and the precise application of the draft. The general framework —relying as it does on the Codex code of practice—is clearly fundamentally correct and should provide a firm basis for detailed control conditions that will fully safeguard the interests of the consumer. I assure the House that the Government will be both diligent and vigilant in ensuring that this essential requirement is met. I commend the motion to the House.

10.33 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I beg to move, to leave out from "foodstuffs" to the end of the Question and add instead thereof:

'opposes the Government's intention to introduce irradiated food for import and sale in the United Kingdom; notes that irradiation exposes the consumer to chemical changes in food and that microbiologically contaminated food could be sold as clean; and believes that improving regulations and monitoring along the food chain are the best ways of solving the current epidemic of food poisoning and ensuring that the consumer has confidence in the safety of food.'.

It is sheer effrontery for the Government to bring this debate forward in such a restricted form when so many hon. Members want to participate. We know that when another Minister spoke on this subject a couple of weeks ago he assured the House that there would be ample opportunity for a good, long discussion on it. This is not the appropriate time at which to do it, but it exposes one of the Government's intentions, which is to try to minimise reporting of their proposed action.

What is the Minister proposing? Is he proposing to lift the ban regardless of what happens with the EEC? Will he lift the ban before the Community takes a decision? That part of his speech was a little confused.

The Minister started strongly, but he set up all manner of aunt Sallies that I have never heard before and then attempted to knock them down. I thought that he was disingenuous from the beginning. It has been the Government's policy not to update regulations, to reduce the number of public servants involved in monitoring food and to cut essential research into food safety. As a result, we have a food poisoning epidemic. There is no doubt about that.

The Government are contemplating cuts in the veterinary colleges when we are importing veterinary surgeons at a rate of one a day. They have reduced the number of personnel in the state veterinary service by 25 per cent. during the past 10 years. They have cut the training of environmental health officers so that we are now 400 short. They have cut vital research into salmonella and botulism. After 10 years of this Government, public health is at its worst for years.

For the Government, irradiation is a technological quick fix but, like so many other quick fixes, the long-term effect will be additional and fundamental problems. Before I pursue that, I shall take up one of the Minister's aunt Sallies. He mentioned radioactive food. He said that the

[Dr. David Clark]

Opposition always argue that the food is radioactive. I have never argued that, and I have never heard any other Labour Member argue it.

Irradiated food is not radioactive. It is irradiated by a radioactive process. We should get that clearly on the record. It is done by using gamma rays. The easiest and best comparison is to radiotherapy for cancer. We all know that the use of a radioactive process poses a potential threat. The Minister is right—radioactivity is in the environment, but we must not expose people to extra radioactivity.

I am not suggesting that the consumer is affected, but I want the Minister to consider whether we can justify exposing people who work in food processing irradiation plants to extra radiation. The Minister shakes his head. I am just asking whether he thinks that that is justified. He is aware of the point because it was in the paper that he produced for his previous speech.

The key weakness in the Minister's speech was his acknowledgement of the fact that there is no adequate testing procedure. He advanced that argument two months ago. He said that there is no simple diagnostic test. It appeared from recent press reports that such a test had been devised but, on investigation, it seems that such claims are hollow. In a submission to Sub-Committee D in the other place, the Ministry said this morning:

"There still seems little prospect that a single test will ever be applicable to all foods, and no guarantee even that tests for individual foods or food classes will be developed in the foreseeable future for every food likely to be treated by irradiation."

That is the Minister's view, and it is my view.

It is difficult to devise a proper monitoring and control system when it is not even possible to test whether food is irradiated. Even the Minister's own experts say that to guarantee public safety, irradiation levels must be below certain dosages. The Minister himself made that point tonight. The EEC document sets special dosage levels for separate products. As no diagnostic test is available, how can the Minister give an assurance about irradiation levels?

Further, how can food be tested to determine whether it has been re-irradiated? As the Minister knows, the kilogray levels are cumulative, and if food is irradiated at the maximum of 10 kilogray twice, it will have received a dosage of 20 kilogray, which exceeds the Government's safety level. In the absence of a diagnostic test, there is no way that irradiated food can be properly monitored.

The Minister and the EEC document both make the point that irradiated food must be labelled as such. It is widely predicted—the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) made this point again tonight—that most irradiated food will be used in the catering trade. I have put this question to the Minister before, and right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House await his answer: how can he ensure that the customer in a restaurant or cafe will be made aware that some of the food available there is irradiated? Will he give the House a guarantee that where irradiated food is used in a restaurant or cafe it will be identified as such on every menu? Unless the Minister gives such a guarantee, he cannot claim that the consumer will be offered a choice.

The argument extends from diagnostics and labelling to the process itself. As the Minister knows from previous debates, not all bacteria are harmful and some perform a benign function. However, when a product is irradiated, all bacteria—good and bad—are killed, so irradiated food could still be contaminated by new bacteria. Furthermore, simply because food has been irradiated, it may be handled less hygienically than otherwise would be the case.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: No, because the Minister gave way only once, and then not to an Opposition Member.

If the bacteria load is only reduced, the bacteria remaining after irradiation can, unless the food is kept under appropriate conditions, multiply. It is our belief, and that of many food scientists, that many people will regard irradiation as an alternative to proper food hygiene. The public will be lulled into a sense of false security, and therein lies the danger.

Irradiation produces chemical changes in food—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may not be aware of this point—certainly the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) is not. Irradiation's ability to cause chemical changes is known to cause a reduction in vitamins A, B, C and E. It is also known to produce highly reactive molecules called free radicals—although they are not political agents. There is evidence to suggest that free radicals can cause cell damage, including that of chromosones, increase the aging process and reduce immunity. The Minister scoffs, but I challenge him to say that the scientists who produced the evidence that I have cited do not know what they are talking about. Some of those scientists are advisers to the Government.

I know that the Minister's advisers have told him about one aspect of the content of food treated with pesticides, which is that that process often leaves residues. The Minister's own research consultative committee residues sub-group has expressed concern about the effect of irradiation on residues. The committee's minutes stated:

"One area of concern was the irradiation of commodities which contained pesticide residues and associated inert substances and the possibility of these residues being transformed into more toxic radiolytic products."

The Minister must answer the point made by his consultative committee.

The Minister must also answer our charge—which he has denied—that irradiation could be used to make bad food appear to be good. Let us take the example of prawns, which are often imported from Asia and can be contaminated with all sorts of micro-organisms. If prawns are infected with hepatitis A, which is not uncommon in some of the waters in the far east, we do not know whether irradiation will kill the virus. All the evidence is that it will not, but we do not have sufficient information about it. That food could appear to be quite harmless and be eaten, although it might contain a high bacterial load.

I shall not discuss the case cited by the Minister and my hon Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), but the Minister is aware of a case in 1965—

Mr. MacGregor: It was 1985.

Dr. Clark: I apologise. The Minister knows the case as well as I do.

Youngs Sea Foods—*[Interruption.]* It is rather worrying that, although the Minister is aware of the case, he is not prepared to face the consequences of it. In 1985 Youngs imported some Malaysian warm water prawns. A

month later they were retested, when it was discovered that they did not meet the company's standards. Those prawns were sent to Holland, where the Dutch firm Gammaster irradiated them, and they were then returned to this country and sold as clean food, mainly to caterers. That is an acknowledged case. The Minister is aware of it because he has seen the files. It was proven that food was irradiated and then sold as clean food.

Our prime objection to the Government's proposal for irradiation is that they consider it to be an alternative to cleaning up the food chain. That will lull the industry into a false sense of security. To illustrate my point I shall quote the British Poultry Federation, which is relevant because the Minister cited poultry towards the end of his speech. It said:

"Following food poisoning scares, the industry was devoting considerable resources, time, skill and money to ensuring hygienic practice at every level of production and processing. BPF believed that this was right, and therefore not only did poultry not need to be irradiated, but its use might give the impression that these health measures had not been successful."

If, as the Minister told the House on 21 June, and repeated tonight, his reason for introducing irradiation is not to extend the shelf life, why do it? Far from making food safer, we believe that the Government's objective is simply to allow, on occasions, bad food to be sold as good —*[Interruption.]* Let me finish with this thought for the Minister. If the Government deny the charge, can they answer a simple, straightforward question? If food is in good condition in the first place, why is it necessary to irradiate it?

10.49 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): One of the first rules that Oppositions learn if they refresh their memories with the book "How to be a Minister", by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), is that they must abuse the Government's case. That is precisely what happened for the first seven minutes of the speech by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark); the rest showed very clearly that no one had been listening to what my right hon. Friend the Minister had said.

I came here with two or three questions to ask my right hon. Friend, because I had been worried by some of the scare stories that I had heard from both the Opposition and that self-seeking publicity organisation the London Food Commission. My right hon. Friend has made a variety of things very clear, the most important being that the consumer is to know whether an item has been irradiated. I am grateful to my right hon Friend for following the line that he took with those of us who were concerned about green-top milk.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: No; this is a short debate.

My right hon. Friend felt that if people were to have the choice whether to buy green-top milk they should at least know that there might be problems if they drank it. As long as we know, I do not believe that there is a problem.

My right hon. Friend went on to deal with another of my anxieties: if I went into the Members' Tea Room or the Harcourt Room, would I be certain of knowing whether a particular food had been irradiated? He made it clear that that would be taken care of when the details were worked out. It is perfectly simple: all that will be needed is a small asterisk against the name of an item that has been irradiated, and anyone who suggests that it is more complicated than that is looking for difficulties. My right hon. Friend also made the important point that it is impossible to say that every kind of food will be irradiated: it is horses for courses.

The hon. Member for South Shields made much of the shortage of environmental health officers. This is not the first time that we have heard about that; those of us who have served for many years in local government first knew of them as sanitary inspectors, and there was a shortage of sanitary inspectors under various Governments. It is far too simplistic to say that the blame lies with the present Government.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: No. With the greatest respect, I have already said that I will not give way. If I do so, the hon. Lady will deprive some of her colleagues and mine of a chance to speak.

It is not correct to say that a shortage of environmental health officers is due to actions taken by the present Government. That shortage is due to the fact that the job may not be as popular as it used to be, or as it should be. It is not an easy job; under an inefficient council the environmental health officer may do a very good job of work and then find the council's legal department so incompetent that cases cannot even be taken. That will knock the stuffing out of a good, reliable EHO.

Having come here with two or three questions that have been worrying my constituents, I find that the Opposition have no case. My right hon. Friend has clarified the facts for the ordinary, sensible man and woman on the Clapham omnibus, and dealt with any worries that I may have had.

10.54 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): On this occasion the Minister has failed to convince the public and hon. Members that there is a need to have irradiated foodstuffs on the shelves in our shops. It is well known to us all that the proposal is opposed by just about everyone apart from food manufacturers. That does not speak highly of the directive.

There is no detection test to establish whether foods have been irradiated. The Institution of Environmental Health Officers stated:

"Until adequate tests are available, several of the Directive's articles will be difficult if not impossible to enforce . . . consumer needs should be paramount and should take precedence over economic and technical needs."

It has been said that irradiation will be used to camouflage sub-standard batches of food, and it is for the Minister to clarify the issue when he replies. It is well known that the long-term effects of irradiation are unknown, as are the effects of other chemicals, such as pesticides, that may be present. I am told that tests have taken place on animals and that these may be unreliable. It is admitted in article 13 that there is a possibility that some health problems will occur in future.

The accepted dosage of 10 kilogray has been challenged by the British Medical Association's board of science. As long as the average of the batch is 10 kilogray, individual

[Mr. Geraint Howells]

readings of up to 15 kilogray will be permitted. That is another issue that the Minister should clarify when he replies.

As there is no simple test for irradiation, the Government propose to introduce controls through the registration of premises and inspections. This will probably be done by environmental health officers, and the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) has told us that we cannot blame the Government if there are not enough EHOs. The Government have been in office for 10 years and if the problem cannot be solved over that period, there is something radically wrong with the Government. I urge them to provide extra financial aid to ensure that we have more EHOs in the next two years. If there is a will, there is a way for the Government to do exactly that. We shall see whether we have more or fewer EHOs in 12 months time. The challenge is there for the Government to accept, and it will be interesting to see whether they do so.

We have been told that irradiated food from the Third world will be allowed into Britain. How do the Government propose to check the kilogray level or the quality of irradiated food from the Third world? Food that has been exposed to irradiation will not be labelled. It will be possible to sell such food to the public if it has been irradiated for checking purposes and the level of irradiation is under 5 kilogray. That blows a hole in the Government's case that consumers will be able to exercise their choice.

The real reason for the Government's move to accept irradiation is that some countries are irradiating food already. The Government want standardisation for 1992. The directive and the Government's move are designed to ensure that by 1992 we try to have everything in order in Britain. Perhaps the Government will regret their decision before 1992.

According to annex V of the directive, approval can be given for irradiation if

"there is a reasonable technological need".

The health of the consumer is mentioned, but at a later stage. If irradiation is allowed, we should press for a ban on fractionalised dosage, a ban on any individual item having an irradiation level of more that 10 kilogray, proper funding for EHOs to enable them regularly to inspect premises, and proper labelling of irradiated food instead of the symbol that has been proposed by the EEC. The Minister must clarify that point. When he opened the debate he said that all food would be labelled, but according to the Community directive there is to be a symbol only. There is a big difference between a symbol and a label.

Food containing raw materials that have been irradiated should be labelled. The Government will say that 20 countries use irradiation, that 30 permit it, that there are no obvious health hazards, that it reduces the danger of salmonella and listeria poisoning and that food manufacturers are anxious to take advantage of the technology. I suppose they are, but the Minister should take note of the views of the British Poultry Federation. During the last six months, that sector of agriculture has been clobbered. If any sector of the industry needs help, it does.

According to the paper published by the British Poultry Federation, it is not very happy about irradiation, with chickens being left on the shelf for long periods. The Minister should take the federation's views into account. Poultry farmers have been seriously affected by the Government's policies.

I hope that the Minister will take note of the views that have been expressed during the debate. The voice of the consumer, as well as the views of food manufacturers who are in favour of food irradiation, must be heard in this House.

11.1 pm

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): The irradiation of food, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is an emotive subject. *[Interruption.]* I think I have been corrected, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I am a traditionalist. I hope you will not mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I refer to you——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Yes, I do mind.

Mrs. Winterton: You do mind.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I enjoy being a female. Vive la difference.

Mrs. Winterton: I take your point, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I had always understood that one addressed the office rather than the holder of the office, irrespective of gender. May I give another example? Many moons ago, in a previous existence, I was a master of foxhounds. Nobody called me a mistress of anything.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am very interested in the way that the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) seeks to address various people, but while I am in the Chair I am to be addressed as Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Winterton: I am delighted so to address you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I bow to your command.

To return to the subject of the debate, food irradiation is an emotive subject. It will not be easy for hon. Members or their constituents to reach a rational decision as to its possible benefits. Many of us, myself included, do not have the scientific background to enable us to sift the facts from the fiction about food irradiation. Therefore, I was pleased to read recently the very first briefing paper of the newly established Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology which seeks to inform parliamentarians on scientific and technical matters underpinning current issues. Its director, Dr. Michael Norton, has prepared a paper on irradiation that is full of easily digested information, which I heartily recommend to hon. Members.

Many studies have been carried out on the irradiation of food for both animals and humans during the last 40 years, but concern remains about its potential use, despite the views of national and international expert bodies that the process is safe. The recent much publicised increase in the number of cases of food poisoning of one kind or another provide one argument as to how irradiation can play a part—I stress the word "part"—in providing greater protection for the public.

That brings me to what I consider to be the best marketing opportunity for fresh food for some time. It will not have escaped the notice of hon. Members that one of our most successful retail outlets has built a reputation second to none in its food department for quality,

freshness and good hygiene. That reputation is reflected to good effect in its sales and profits. In these more affluent days, people are prepared to pay more for fresh, good-quality products. I believe that, with correct labelling, a fresh chicken, for example, will outsell by far its irradiated counterpart. I suggest that that answers the questions raised by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells).

The House should also note that the standards of production, processing and distribution of fresh foods in Britain are far higher than in virtually any other country, so I do not believe for a moment that irradiated food will provide any competition whatsoever, although it could prove useful in treating imported herbs and spices, for the reasons given by my right hon. Friend the Minister in his opening speech.

The high capital and running costs of irradiation equipment will be added to the price of the food and might easily outweigh any perceived benefits. However, mandatory labelling, with rigorous checks for the wholesale, retail and catering sectors, is essential to inform the consumer. More will have to be done in education in schools and elsewhere to provide people with the facts so that they can make an informed choice.

Finally, I would not hesitate to eat irradiated food, and I have probably done so abroad on many occasions without knowing it. Surely we shall have the best of both worlds in the United Kingdom as consumers will have available to them, where appropriate, irradiated and non-irradiated food. When they are fully armed with the appropriate information and when internationally recognised standards are introduced and rigorously enforced, there will be no problems whatsoever.

11.6 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clywd, South-West): I shall be brief as there is so little time for this important debate. Far more time should have been devoted to it.

I should like to know who wants irradiated food. The public does not seem to want it. I have seen no great demands for it. The British Medical Association does not want it and nor does the Institute of Environmental Health Officers, but the food industry does.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Not all the food industry wants it. The Co-op does not want it.

Mr. Jones: As my hon. Friend said, the Co-operative Wholesale Society, which is one of the largest retailers in the country, does not want it. Why do the others want it? They want it for profit and because it will be easier for them to deal with the food at the end of its production life and because the most disreputable outlets recognise it as a way of disguising poor manufacturing techniques.

I am a microbiologist by profession. Many hon. Members, particularly Conservative Members, are being misled.

Mr. Frank Cook: By the nose.

Mr. Jones: As my hon. Friend said, they are being misled by the nose and possibly by other parts of their anatomy. They do not seem to know what they are talking about.

As a microbiologist, I believe that the only objective test for the quality of food is the detection and enumeration of its bacterial load. If the food is irradiated there is no objective test of its quality. The toxins produced by the organisms in the food will remain and will often be proportional to the original infection of the food. As the Minister said, food infections such as salmonella and listeria will be prevented, but genuine food poisoning will not. As the Minister should know, food poisonings are botulism and staphylococcal food poisoning. Staphylococcal food poisoning is one of the most common food poisonings and will not be prevented by the irradiation of food as staphylococcal food poisoning depends on the production of a toxin by the bacterium during its infective period—during the growth of the bacterium in the food.

The Minister did not say anything about the possible long-term effects. Judging by the way that we have discussed irradiation, one would think that it was extremely easy to kill bacteria by irradiating them. It is not. Bacteria are extremely resistant organisms. They are much more resistant than human beings. It takes about 4·5 kilogray to kill the average human being; it takes considerably more to kill the average bacterium and much more than that to kill the average spore. As the Minister said, we are not talking about spores being killed.

If spores survive and vegatative organisms do not, that means that the spores can germinate and grow after irradiation. Spore-bearing organisms are the most dangerous organisms in causing food poisoning. A dose that will kill a micro-organism does so in a particular way —by cell damage, due to the release of highly reactive radicals. They are basically produced by the splitting of water into its constituent parts. They last fractions of a second, but they react rapidly with other cell constituents. They create small quantities of esoteric chemicals which are not found in nature. No one knows, and none of the Minister's advisers can possibly know, about the long-term effects of exposure to those chemicals.

This does not happen just in the micro-organism. It happens in the main body of the food. Food consists of proteins, fats and carbohydrates in exactly the same way as micro-organisms do. Small amounts of exotic chemicals are being added to the food by dosing it with radiation. I could give a long list, but the ones that are easily detected are peroxidated fatty acids and hydroxlated aromatics.

Mr. Frank Cook: Do Ministers follow that?

Mr. Jones: I do not think that they do. Those components are produced in the food and sometimes affect it so much that it becomes inedible—the Minister must know about that. Those compounds are there, organoleptically, by taste, in some foods. They are also in the foods that are not affected by taste. No one knows how they will affect humans if consumed over a long period. If those chemicals were added as a preservative, they would not be allowed.

To say that labelling gives people choice is nonsense. One Conservative Member has said that that is impossible in restaurants. They will choose the cheapest prawns for their curry. They will not bother to say that the prawns have been irradiated. It would certainly put off customers if they did. Labelling is no use without a test that can prove irradiation. Such a test does not exist. If it did, it would be testing for the very chemicals that cause the problem in the long term. If we are talking about choice for consumers, we should not even consider irradiation of food.

11.13 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I support the Government motion and oppose the Opposition amendment. I support the Government because they are being consistent with their policy to make their decisions in the light of the best available scientific evidence. There is an overwhelming weight of scientific evidence in favour of food irradiation. The toxicological, microbiological and nutritional effects of irradiation have been studied extensively and as a result the process has been declared safe by international and United Kingdom scientific committees. It has been tried and tested for decades—for more than 45 years. American astronauts, for example, take irradiated food on missions and in 1991, the first——

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gill: No, because I am conscious of the fact that some of my hon. Friends and a few Opposition Members wish to speak.

In 1991, the first Briton in space will eat irradiated food with the cosmonauts aboard the USSR satellite MIR.

Throughout the Opposition's contributions to the debate there is an innuendo about a lack of control and labelling. One fact that they fail to mention, which has not so far been mentioned in the debate, is that the cost of an irradiation plant is between £3 million and £5 million. I venture to suggest that the Government will know exactly where the irradiation plants are. I am persuaded that that is a true statement of fact because I understand that, at present, no such plants are manufactured or available in the United Kingdom and would, therefore, have to be imported, thereby reinforcing my argument that the Government would know exactly where the plants were.

All known processes for preserving food rely on arresting or slowing the natural process of food spoilage. It is inconceivable that irradiation will make unsafe or bad food into good food.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) made a point about the poultry industry. I agreed when he said that the poultry industry was hard pressed; most hon. Members would agree with that. However, he failed to appreciate that poultry producers will be able, when the legislation is passed, to choose to irradiate their product to make it safer for the consumer. The consumer, likewise, can then exercise his or her option to buy the irradiated product, which will give greater confidence in that product. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North suggested, that could be a boon to the poultry industry and to poultry consumers. Let us make it clear that the Government are not compelling producers to irradiate their products.

The Opposition amendment refers to "chemical changes in food". Irradiation does not lead to any significant loss of vitamins in food and, as my right hon. Friend the Minister said, it does not make that food radioactive. The Opposition also talk about contaminated food being sold as clean food. If food is of an unacceptable microbiological standard before the process, those same factors will give it away after the process. That is a fact. The Opposition then speak about—*[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members listen, they might learn something. The best——

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise.

Mr. Gill: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Opposition must agree with the following because they are their words. They talk of

> "the best ways of solving the current epidemic of food poisoning and ensuring that the consumer has confidence in the safety of food."

What they deliberately omit to say is that 90 per cent. of food-borne illness worldwide is caused by salmonella and campylobacter, according to the World Health Organisation. Surely the Opposition know that listeria, salmonella and campylobacter can all be dealt with effectively by food irradiation.

11.19 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): My first point concerns dosages. In his statement in June, the Minister said that the dosages involved were very low—a maximum of 10 kilogray. I took it upon myself as a scientist to look up exactly what that meant. Suppose that, instead of food, one of us were in the conveyor belt going through the irradiating machine; the 10 kilogray dosage would be lethal. It is equivalent to the exposure that we would receive from 100 million chest X-rays. It would destroy every single cell in our body. Indeed, the purpose of food irradiation is to kill every live cell in food. When we hear talk of low doses of irradiation, we must recognise it as an absolute lie. We are talking about massive doses.

It is therefore not surprising that subjecting food to irradiation has a substantial effect on the carbohydrates, fats, proteins and every chemical component. It can also result in a cooked texture or rancid flavours of fats. When exposed, fruits and vegetables become soft because the cellulose molecules are broken down.

What particularly alarms me about the concept of irradiating food is that it produces prodigious quantities of free radicals—that is fragmented molecules—with molecules split in half, carbon-carbon bonds split in half and so on. Free radicals are very reactive and when they combine they form all sorts of mutants or deviants of their original structure. Irradiation will hydroxylate benzene rings and who knows what will be produced out of the food. As a former research chemist, my strong instinct—I have not yet gone into the subject fully—is that many of the products of irradiation will be carcinogenic.

When I examined the evidence for and against food irradiation in preparation for the debate, I found that the quality of the research into food irradiation, carried out 40 years ago and since, is very unsatisfactory. One finds a great deal of falsification of evidence and cheating, and many untrue claims have been published. There is evidence of lower birth rates, lower growth rates, kidney damage, increased incidence of tumours, chromosome defects and a lowering of resistance to disease—of the immune system —in animals fed with irradiated foods. I am most concerned, therefore, about the long-term safety implications for human health of eating large quantities of irradiated foods.

We have heard tonight of various committees making declarations about the safety or otherwise of irradiated food. For me, at any rate, the No. 1 organisation must be the British Medical Association, which has no vested

interest in irradiated food. It is interested only in the health of the population. I am sure that the Minister will be well aware that the BMA said in the conclusion to its report:

"The Board believes that the current advice . . . may not sufficiently take account of, still less exclude, possible long-term medical effects on the population."

If the BMA says that, we should listen. The non-scientists among us should bear that advice in mind.

We have heard that 35 countries allow food irradiation —125 do not. Of the 35 that do, only 21 use it, and in a trivial way, on very few foods; less than 0·1 per cent. of the food eaten in those countries is irradiated. It is no great answer to our salmonella, listeria and botulism problems. On an international scale, food irradiation is trivial.

The Government should listen to what consumers are saying loud and clear. According to every survey, they are saying that they do not believe that food irradiation is safe and that they will choose not to buy irradiated food. The Government have had some green pretensions in the past year or so but, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition said the other day, it is a case of talking green but acting dirty. That is happening with irradiated food.

11.24 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): This year there has been an unprecedented upsurge in interest in food matters by the media and others, including the anti-egg lobby, the anti-cook-chill lobby, and the plain sensational lobby. The housewife does not know where she stands. All food is in danger of having bacteria in it. Most food has bacteria in it. All food that is not cooked properly is a danger. We must avoid poisoning from bugs in food. No one in his right mind eats raw food. The Government can exhort the housewife to cook food properly and manufacturers can tell her how best to do it, but, if she ignores those common-sense instructions, there will be food poisoning and people will harm themselves and have tummy upsets to a greater or lesser extent.

Irradiation has the power to eliminate most problems, yet, somehow, people are being made to fear irradiation, even though the Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods has concluded that, subject to correctly applied doses, irradiation can be safe and food can remain wholesome. The House has heard from the Opposition that irradiation can make food look different.

Mr. Martyn Jones: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alexander: I am sorry, I will not give way. I am short of time.

Irradiation cannot make any difference to the look of food; it just prolongs its useful life. Nor, as the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) claims, will it encourage sloppy standards. People will not say that, because food is irradiated, they need not bother to cook it properly. That is another bad argument against irradiation. Irradiation kills the bacteria and bugs that cause food poisoning, and it also prolongs shelf-life.

It must be stressed time and again that irradiation cannot make bad food good. In a few years, irradiation will be as acceptable as cook-chill is now. *[Laughter.]* Yes, cook-chill is acceptable, and so is microwave cooking. I am not suggesting that it is compulsory. My right hon. Friend has said that people will be told when food is irradiated and they will be able to make their own consumer choice.

The British Poultry Federation, whose briefing has already been mentioned this evening, has made an interesting point. It says, "OK, we have spent a lot of money on improving our produce and on reassuring the consumer that our food is first class. If we are doing all this, why should we then have irradiation on top of it?" That is a fair point, but perhaps the federation will have to live with it. We need the two standards of food production: first, at production level and, secondly, to prolong food life by irradiation, as is now proposed.

My right hon. Friend must take cognisance of hon. Members' concern about the implementation of the EEC proposals. They cannot be implemented until all the safeguards that have rightly been announced are in place.

Those safeguards will be vital in ensuring consumer confidence. Clear labelling and absolute certainty that the levels are safe and are not in any way cumulatively poisonous will be essential. It is vital that the consumer is reassured that there will be no harmful side effects. The experts have let us down so often over the years in food and other matters that the housewife is entitled to that belt and braces reassurance. We need that double assurance, but, once we have it, we would be foolish to turn our back on the technique. The Government have a public relations job to do in that area, and in carrying out that task they will certainly have my support.

11.30 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Grimsby is Europe's food town with the biggest concentration of food production and expertise in Europe.

It is important that we consider the views of the consumer who is reluctant to see the irradiation process introduced. I can be brief in giving the three reasons why I do not think that we should accept the directive and why we should not lift the ban. The first and most central one is that there is no way of detecting whether food has been irradiated. There is no way of checking on the process, which means that we cannot maintain effective controls. We do not know how many times food has been processed or whether it has been processed. Labelling is no use at all for consumers in restaurants, canteens or hospitals. How is the consumer at that level to know whether food has been irradiated? How are we in the House of Commons canteen to know? How are people in the Health Service to know, bearing in mind that the Health Service has rushed into cook-chill and accepted a weakening of its standards in that respect? The fact that there is no means of detection is one of the central arguments against accepting the directive.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Does my hon. Friend agree that the public's perception of this will be that the Minister's cavalier attitude to public health and food hygiene and his slavish support for this directive amounts to the legalised contamination of our food?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The public's fear of this process will not be allayed by the way in which it is being rushed through.

My second point bears on that. I am satisfied with what the Minister said about the process being policed in this country, but I am not satisfied that it will be policed as effectively in all the other EEC countries or that the Commission will maintain an effective control. How are we to know what happens in Spain, with its well-known

[Mr. Mitchell]

attitude to cooking oil? How are we to know that the process will be policed effectively in Greece or other countries?

My third point—again, it is a central point—is that the process will be used to disguise failure. The way to eliminate problems and to upgrade standards is by continuous improvements in inspection, control, regulations, and in the hygiene with which food is processed and treated. Irradiation is a way of disguising failure in those directions. I have outlined the way to improve things. Irradiation is a cheap and rather nasty alternative. On those grounds, we should support the amendment.

11.32 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I begin by raising a procedural point with you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I understand that, under Standing Order No. 14, you are empowered not to put the Question that we are debating if you consider that the matter has not been properly debated.

We are debating a matter of considerable importance. Although I make no criticism of the three Front Bench spokesmen who made their cases, they took half the time available for the debate. Many hon. Members of all parties have been trying to speak but have been unable to do so. All hon. Members who have spoken have been reasonable and have made speeches of only two or three minutes in an attempt to ensure that the debate covers all the issues. However, most importantly, we have had an admission from the Minister that, whether or not the European Commission approves the document that we are being asked to take note of tonight, the Government intend to act unilaterally by legislation and to lift the ban on food irradiation in this country.

Therefore, I submit to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this is not an ordinary debate. It is not a take-note debate; it is a major debate on a matter of major national importance. I shall submit to you at the close of my remarks the sincere request to consider not putting the Question that we are debating.

When the Minister opened the debate, he made much of the question of consumer choice. He presented the argument for irradiation as one that would assist consumers in making a choice as to whether they would wish to purchase irradiated food or not. I put it to the Minister that, if the freedom that he wants to extend to consumers is to be meaningful, people who are purchasing food must have the means to know whether that food has been irradiated or not. The central argument concerns the diagnostic test, which the Minister in his 15-minute address did not mention once, but which was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). The Opposition would take a different view if we knew that there was a diagnostic test. If it was possible to test whether food had been irradiated or not, consumers would be given a meaningful choice.

I put it to the Government that that originally was their view. Two years ago, I asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for his view on labelling:

> "Is it the Government's view that labelling will have to be introduced but that, to make such labelling effective, there will have to be a system of tests to allow for independent analysis of products which might or might not have been irradiated?"

The Parliamentary Secretary replied:

> "The hon. Gentleman has summed up all the difficulties that we presently have with regard to irradiation and people's fears of it. As he said, if we are to label products, there must be some way of testing whether irradiation has occurred." —[*Official Report*, 22 October, 1987; Vol. 120, c. 906-7.]

That was the Government's view two years ago. What has happened since to persuade them to change their mind? Could it have been salmonella, the importation of rotten meat from Ireland, listeria, or the exposure of the deficiencies in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by the former Under-Secretary of State for Health? Something has happened to cause the Government to change their view. We have not heard one mention tonight of labelling. We will get instead a massive propaganda campaign at the public expense to try to persuade the public to accept irradiation.

The Minister and his colleagues may attempt to persuade the public. However, my hon. Friends the Members for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) and for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) in their expert contributions—expert in the proper sense of the word—made it clear that the food industry is not convinced. We have heard that the British Poultry Federation, which represents all sectors of the poultry industry, is not prepared to countenance irradiation.

Nor is the shellfish industry—the one industry that we are told is particularly appropriate for the use of irradiation. The campaign against irradiation has, in fact, been led by the prime exponent of modern techniques in preserving shellfish—Mr. Ken Bell from Newcastle upon Tyne. He is the chief executive of a company of international esteem. In 1979, he received the Queen's award for export achievement. His view on irradiation is this:

> "Customers in Germany have actually told me that for them our promise never to sell irradiated products is a guarantee of their quality. In countries where food irradiation is legal, buyers and the consumer are unable to be sure whether the food they buy has been irradiated, or to know how it was contaminated in order to make irradiation necessary."

That was precisely the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for South Sheilds (Dr. Clark), and precisely the point that the Minister and his colleagues failed to address in the debate.

We have heard supporting speeches from some of the Minister's friends, and we have heard the argument time and time again that "irradiation cannot make bad food good". That was the Minister's claim, and that was the parrot cry that came from Conservative Members. I have to tell those hon. Members, however, that the technology of irradiation is capable of precisely that. Conservative Members may not have the *Indian Express*, which is published in Bombay, on their daily list of required reading. I shall hand the Minister a copy of that paper dated 1 February 1989. If Conservative Members listen carefully they might learn something from one of its articles, which said:

> "Nuclear proliferation has arrived in India: not through the fabrication of high-profile atomic warheads, but through more subtle means."

It stated that the Indian Government had approved the use of irradiation and the article continued:

> "It was believed that the wastes from any town"—

human sewage—

> "could meet part of its ruminant feed requirements from sewage sludge which had been 'suitably disinfected'."

The technology that the Government are prepared to legalise in this country is now being used in the Third

world to disinfect human sludge [illegible] recycled as animal feed. That is a case of technology go[illegible] berserk. Tonight is also a case of the Gover[illegible]ent ignoring the dangers from BSE—bovine spongiform encephalopathy—and from the other ways in which food can be contaminated.

The case for irradiation has not been proved. I put it to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there is an overwhelming case on which you should rule tonight for this matter to be debated further.

11.40 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Richard Ryder): Bacterial contamination of food by salmonella, campylobacter and listeria is an international problem. The Labour party's insinuation that it is confined to our shores or is more prevalent in Britain defies logic and merits mockery.

No panacea, no quick fix, to use the description deployed by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and no magic formula can remove the problem altogether. That is why it is imperative to tackle food poisoning through a range of measures used at every stage of the chain—and irradiation must be one weapon in our large armoury.

Highly qualified scientists, men and women of great probity and distinction, drawn from the World Health Organisation, and from the Food and Agriculture Organisation firmly believe that food irradiation can help to reduce food poisoning by enhancing safety standards for poultrymeat, some shell fish and herbs and spices. Despite that, Labour Members have tried to argue that food irradiation is untested if not untried and, if not untested, is unsafe. Such claims are nonsense—minor triumphs of obliquity over reason.

There is nothing dangerously new about irradiation. Ionising radiation was first discovered in 1896 and its practical use was first pursued in 1921. Since then its value and safety have been checked and double checked by international scientists. They have confirmed the safety and wholesomeness of irradiated food and they have underlined its benefits to the consumer. The WHO, the FAO, the EC scientific committee on food and our Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods chaired by Sir Arnold Burgen, the master of Darwin college, Cambridge, have all reached the same conclusions. Their evaluations have already led 35 other countries, including the United States, Japan, Socialist France, Socialist Spain, Socialist Norway and Socialist New Zealand.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Not Socialist enough.

Mr. Ryder: All right, perhaps Socialist Cuba will do. Despite overwhelming international approval for irradiation, the dear old Labour party casts aspersions on its safety. It shuns not only the advice of scientists, but its Socialist brethren Governments abroad.

I have a sneaking respect for the hon. Member for South Shields, but faced with the choice of accepting scientific advice on food safety from him or from the WHO, I opt for the latter. I fancy that if the Labour party was in power it would do the same.

The truth is that all the main international, reputable health agencies favour irradiation—35 countries permit it. Irradiation may already be used in Britain for hospital patients with suppressed immune systems, but I do not hear the Labour party complain about that.

The process will be strictly controlled by licences and inspections. Irradiated food will be properly labelled. Consumers will have the freedom to buy irradiated food and they will have the freedom not to buy it.

In a bid to embrace as many emotive expressions as possible, the Opposition have cobbled together an amendment which succeeds only in combining ignorance with blinding glimpses of the obvious. The amendment observes that irradiation

"exposes the consumer to chemical changes in food".

So what? Any method of processing food involves chemical changes. Simply heating food causes chemical changes. Does it expose the consumer to risks?

Contrary to what the Opposition appear to believe, chemical changes in food from irradiation are less than in other processes. I can only assume that the Labour party's ignorance on the subject is a voluntary misfortune. If it denies——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have listened very carefully to the comments of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) as, indeed, I have listened to this entire debate. I am also aware of the powers given to the Chair under the Standing Order. I believe that there has been adequate time for this debate and I must now put the Question.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I understand your ruling, but can I ask you to reconsider? I am sure that the number of hon. Members who have been in the Chamber throughout the debate must be clear evidence that the House has not had sufficient opportunity to debate the issue. We need further debate. There are points of view that have not been expressed.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. As I have made clear, I have listened to this entire debate. I have heard every hon. Member who has spoken. I am aware of the seriousness of the matter, but I have a duty to perform, and that duty now is to put the Question.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 127, Noes 182.

Division No. 297] **[11.46 pm**

AYES

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Clay, Bob
Beith, A. J.	Clelland, David
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Bermingham, Gerald	Cohen, Harry
Blair, Tony	Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Boyes, Roland	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Bradley, Keith	Cousins, Jim
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Cox, Tom
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Cryer, Bob
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Cummings, John
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Buckley, George J.	Dalyell, Tam
Caborn, Richard	Darling, Alistair
Callaghan, Jim	Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Dewar, Donald
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Doran, Frank
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Dunnachie, Jimmy

Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 10377/88, relating to irradiation of foodstuffs; and supports the Government's intention to seek to ensure that a directive is adopted that will allow the use of the process under conditions that will fully safeguard the interests of the consumer.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

SEAT BELTS

That the draft Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts by Children in Rear Seats) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 26th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

NHS Reform

11.59 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I should like to present a petition on behalf of my constituents, who have expressed deep concern about the proposals for the Health Service. Expressing a minority opinion, the Government in Scotland have set their face against consultation and listening to the Scottish people.

I present the petition on behalf of Robert McLearie and 5,000 other constituents. It was collected over a period of 68 Saturday mornings in my constituency, and its hallmark is the fact that it was not possible for everyone who wanted to sign it to do so: people of all social and political persuasions felt that the Government should think again and retain the integrity of the National Health Service, rather than devaluing the most precious political measure introduced in this century.

My constituents ask the House to pay heed to their sentiments,

and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Prince of Wales Hospital, Rhydlafar

12.1 am

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I wish to present a petition in the name of Jane Davidson and more than 22,000 residents of south Wales, who ask the House to beg the Secretary of State for Wales to reject the closure of the children's ward at the Prince of Wales orthopaedic hospital, Rhydlafar, near Cardiff.

The 12 bedded children's ward at the hospital is the only specialist centre for the treatment of orthopaedic problems for children in all the six counties of south and mid-Wales. Although the hospital lies within the purview of south Glamorgan and is therefore under the control of south Glamorgan health authority, the ward's closure would leave the vast majority of Wales without a specialist centre for the treatment of such problems. That is why feelings are so strong that a large number of signatories have signed the petition.

Wherefore your petitioners would pray that your honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for Health to reject any proposals for such closure brought before him by the South Glamorgan Health Authority. And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Toxic Waste Disposal (Cleveland)

12.3 am

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): You, Madam Deputy Speaker, the hon. Members who have just rushed out of the Chamber and the members of the public who have left the Gallery are all responsible, in their individual ways, for producing toxic waste. That is not to suggest for a moment that they all work in a chemical factory or have their own test tubes at home. However, they wear clothes that come from a chemical base and they drive cars full of plastics and other chemically based products. We all buy well-wrapped goods, and all those wrappings are chemically based. Without the chemical industry, the country would find it difficult to maintain modern standards of life.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Many toxic waste compounds are generated in chemical-producing areas. Has my hon. Friend noticed that although we are discussing chemical waste in Cleveland no Cleveland Members are present on the Opposition Benches?

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. I am grateful, too, that my hon. Friends the Members for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague), for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) and for Fylde (Mr. Jack) are in their places. I know that they have a deep interest in this subject. I am not surprised that Labour Members are not present because I am aware that they have come to a sorry state. The Labour party locally appears to be opposed to the introduction of any further incinerators in Cleveland but Labour Members have tabled an early-day motion—it has been signed by all the Labour party's Teesside Members bar one—that states:

"A proven, safe and effective means of disposal, of almost all such compounds already existing, is incineration at appropriate temperatures under adequate pressure in suitable plant by qualified staff using correct procedures under proper supervision applying constant monitoring in accordance with a predetermined and approved specification".

I believe that that was extracted from one handout of one of the incinerator companies that is seeking to construct a plant in Cleveland.

Cleveland is not familiar to many people and its history is short. We in Cleveland are gradually moving away from the allegations of child abuse, only to find that the county is gaining a new reputation as the dustbin of Britain. Is it any wonder that almost every incineration company in the country is lining up to put its incineration plant in Cleveland? Nine applications have been submitted or are about to be submitted and one has been determined by the county council. The lay people who constitute the council rejected the best advice of their officers and the issue will go before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment for determination.

Let us imagine my right hon. Friend taking note of all the expert advice and reading the comments of the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), who said:

"We must be warned against giving the impression that chemical waste incineration was in itself a bad method of disposal. That is not true. In most cases incineration, using the right procedure, is the best way of doing it."

That is not how the people of Cleveland see it. I have received 1,200 letters from individual constituents telling me that they do not want one extra incinerator in Cleveland.

Mr. Devlin: I have received over 1,000 letters from my constituents on this issue. I think that all those who wrote agree with the view that Cleveland should do its bit to dispose of its own toxic waste if that is necessary. It is unrealistic, however, for every incineration company to establish a site in Cleveland. My constituents think—I certainly do—that the Government should provide a national scheme to distribute incinerators evenly throughout the country so that the entire burden does not fall upon Cleveland.

Mr. Holt: The management of toxic waste is a matter of major concern and it can no longer be left to local authorities. It is too great a responsibility to place upon them. That was clearly stated in the report of the Select Committee on the Environment, on which I have the honour to serve. In the Committee's report of February 1989 there was a clear recommendation that there should be 10 waste disposal authority areas similar to the new National Rivers Authority areas. Decisions should not be made by local councillors, who do not have the relevant expertise or knowledge. Their electors would never vote for them again if they supported having massive numbers of incinerators to dispose of toxic waste. That goes almost right across the board.

When I was talking to a journalist in the north-east I made the off-the-cuff comment that the Select Committee had been to Sharpness and that I thought it was very much the place where one could site a toxic waste disposal plant. It has all the attributes that we have in Cleveland. They went out of their way to tell us how good their roads are. They have a dock that is not used enough, good road access, the river Severn and a chemical works nearby, yet they panicked at the thought of having a chemical waste disposal plant in that area.

What is even more surprising is what was said in answer to the local Member of Parliament, my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman). I take my hat off to him because he did a darned good job for the people in his constituency by getting the Secretary of State for the Environment, no less, to make a statement in the House of Commons on 26 April this year in which he said:

"I can confirm that there are no sites taking hazardous waste in the Sharpness area or indeed anywhere in my hon. Friend's constituency and that there are no plans for any such hazardous waste sites there. If any hazardous waste site were to be proposed near the Sharpness canal or any other area in the lower reaches of the Severn, there would be severe water pollution problems,"—

I wonder whether anybody has told him about the river Tees? I wonder whether he has any idea what that river is like. My right hon. Friend continued by saying,

"and that would be strictly against the provisions of the Control of Pollution Act 1974."

That would give Greenpeace a laugh in the north-east. He continued:

"In addition, the necessary consents would, of course, be required."—[*Official Report*, 26 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. 943.]

He does not go on to say, "They would be required from me, and I am not going to give them." But the hint was there—"There ain't going to be no plants there, or in south-west Surrey, or anywhere else, apart from poor old Cleveland."

We said in our report that the Government must have a policy and a strategy. Our report has been around for only about six months, so it is unlikely that there will be any action. To put a slight gloss on that, it seems to us that every time a particular subject is under discussion the

Government come up with a little bit of action. The question of contaminated land has been raised. For the first time in more than 10 years this week there was a Department of the Environment press release on contaminated land. Is that not something?

We also said in our report that there should be more of Her Majesty's inspectors of pollution. Their number is disgracefully low. What happened when we said that? There was a statement within a few weeks—we have not even debated the report yet—by Lord Caithness, who announced on 7 December that 13 additional inspectors were to be appointed, of whom nine would take over responsibility for waste. Remember that date, 7 December. They were tripping over themselves so fast that they managed to get the advertisements out by the middle of June. To date, no one has been interviewed. Because of the speed at which they work in the Department of the Environment, I doubt whether they have even opened the envelopes.

This crucial matter, however, affects the lives of my constituents, those of my colleagues' constituents and everyone else in the north-east. We are not getting a fair deal from the Government. If we are to get a fair deal from the Government, they must introduce legislation to control toxic waste. The problem is approaching crisis proportions. Everyone is becoming much more aware of the dangers that can arise from what was historically thought to be quite a safe thing to do—to dig a hole in the ground and stick stuff in it. We used to think it could be put out to sea and that somehow the fish would get rid of it. We now know that the best and safest method of dealing with it is probably incineration, although biodegradation may prove to be the long-term answer.

The Government must have a strategy to reduce the amount of toxic waste that is produced. In America that has been achieved with great success. Why are we waiting for a policy? We need a strategy, a policy and legislation on toxic waste disposal. It is grossly unfair that almost without exception disposal occurs in the north-east of England. There is some in the north-west and in Cheshire, but it is always where there are heavy conurbations.

I know that my hon. Friend will try to charm me, as she is a very charming lady, but she will not get me off her back until the Government take action.

12.15 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) has rightly raised a matter of considerable concern to his constituents. He has already seen me to discuss the subject earlier in the year. Apart from my hon. Friends the Members for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) and for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague), he is the only Cleveland Member of Parliament to express strong concerns on the subject.

I appreciate the way in which my hon. Friend put the subject of toxic waste in its proper context. We have a growing chemical industry which has performed a wonderful service to mankind. Because of many of those advances, our life expectancy is now 77 years, whereas 100 years ago it was 44. My hon. Friend mentioned modern clothing and cars. The production of those assets of modern life inevitably produces dangerous and toxic substances that have to be disposed of. Toxic waste is only a small part of the waste stream. About 26 million tonnes of domestic waste are produced annually, but only about 1·5 million tonnes of toxic waste.

My hon. Friend was less than generous in his comments about Government action in recent years. There has been a string of consultation papers and documents in pursuit of updating and ensuring that we have waste disposal laws that sufficiently recognise modern dangers and modern methods of dealing with toxic substances. Certainly my hon. Friend and other hon. Members have done valiant service on the Select Committee. They have earned an excellent reputation for taking up subjects of particular environmental concern. I pay a fulsome tribute to my hon. Friend and other hon. Members on that Committee.

Hazardous waste disposal is a particularly difficult subject. Strategies have to be adopted for different parts of the country to meet needs and in the broader context. I must point out to my hon. Friend that Cleveland sends waste to Ellesmere Port, Widnes, Macclesfield, Warrington, Thurrock, Southampton, Walsall and Hucknall. Neither are all the specialists plants, which require very high standards of performance, situated in the north-east or the north-west. Recently, I visited a plant in Southampton which was involved in that particularly difficult work.

As my hon. Friend has considerable expertise in the subject, he will know that the disposal of substances such as polychlorinated biphenyls, dioxins and other difficult chemicals requires combustion at a particular temperature for a carefully monitored period to ensure that they can be dealt with without adverse effect on the environment.

Local confidence is important. We believe that local authorities should be responsible for dealing with waste, which is closely related to planning matters. That is where we disagreed with the Select Committee.

Mr. Devlin: Is my hon. Friend aware that in January this year only 23 out of 79 waste disposal authorities in England had completed their waste management plans? Under great pressure, after 11 years, the figure is now, in July, only 58 out of 79. That means that 21 have still to complete their plans.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is right. Waste management plans have an important part to play. We have been pressing waste disposal authorities to ensure that their plans are in place. Cleveland produced a plan some time ago which made it clear that it believed that there was scope for further provision of incinerators in that area. We believe that the local authority must take this responsibility when establishing a plant. It is a matter first for the planning authority—in this case, the waste disposal authority, or the development corporation. Before any plant can operate, a licence must be secured from the waste disposal authority. Plants of the particular sensitivity that we are discussing tonight require prior authorisation from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh will be aware, given his experience, of the additional strength that we are giving HMIP and of our pursuit of the integrated pollution control approach whereby waste that is dealt with in water, put up chimneys or put on the land is considered across the spectrum by a team of inspectors. He

[Mrs. Bottomley]

will be aware, because of his membership of the Select Committee, that the Government have made clear their intention to legislate at the earliest opportunity.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend was less than generous about some of the comments that his Committee made about the Government's proposals. The proposal to introduce a duty of care on the producer of waste, the plans to establish registration for carriers and the plans to ensure that there is better licensing, better enforcement and better monitoring of waste disposal sites are matters where the Select Committee has recognised what the Government seek to do.

Mr. Holt: We told the Government.

Mrs. Bottomley: We appreciate the debate that is taking place. I do not want to vie with my hon. Friend about who was the initiator of such eminently sensible and good ideas. I can only ask him to look at some of the consultation documents that my Department has published over the years. It is right and proper that, as we near the end of our consultation period, we should move towards legislation that will do the job that we all wish to see done—deal safely and effectively with the waste which is an inevitable by-product of modern life, while ensuring that there is public confidence.

The Government seek to advise and assist waste disposal authorities through the work of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, which has produced a series of well respected, long-standing waste management papers to provide local authorities with the latest information, technical guidance and scientific advice about the best ways of dealing with waste.

We look to local authorities to ensure that they conduct their waste regulatory functions effectively, and I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees with me on that point. It is envisaged in the plan that much of the provision within Cleveland will be by the private sector. My hon. Friend will be aware from the debate on the Water Bill of the arguments about the importance, where possible, of separating the regulation and operation of plants. We believe that, under our proposals, those plants will be much more effectively regulated and local authorities will face up to this responsibility without fear or favour.

We look to industry to work harder on waste minimisation. With the proposals for integrated pollution control, waste minimisation will become a material consideration for the first time. Recycling is equally important. My right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Trade and Industry are pressing industries to see what they can do to ensure that they do not produce waste unnecessarily.

The Cleveland county council waste disposal plan, which was produced in February 1987, was a comprehensive document. It envisaged that there would be a need for further provision in that area. As my hon. Friend has made clear on behalf of his constituents, there has been local concern—I have been aware of it—about the number of proposals that have come forward to respond to the need in his area to meet the market for waste disposal. Clearly no one envisages that all the different proposals will result in success. Five have come to the notice of the regional office, but only one has been to the formal stage of a planning application. As my hon. Friend said, that was turned down by the county council. He will understand that I cannot comment specifically on that proposal, because it is likely to come to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on appeal, as he has a quasi-judicial role.

However, I want to emphasise clearly that waste disposal proposals for incinerators of this sophisticated, extremely expensive type, which require a great deal of investment, have first to go to the planning authority. Once they have been considered and accepted by the planning authority, they have to obtain a licence from the waste disposal authority. In addition, they have to have prior authorisation from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. At every stage of the process, it is crucial that public safety and the protection of the environment are maintained. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that in this country we have not brought forward our waste disposal legislation, I am pleased to say, on the basis of crises or disasters. We are almost unique in not having had any great disaster. Enforcement and regulation have taken place effectively. However, we recognise fully that in an advanced modern society we want to be absolutely confident that all the necessary steps are taken.

We look to local authorities to ensure that their plans are frequently reviewed. I recognise my hon. Friend's concern that some local authorities have not prepared the plans we should like to see. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is in touch with local authorities on this matter and we look to further progress being made.

However, in a world in which development, progress and industrial advance add to our quality of life, we must recognise also that the by-products of modern life will be waste, and some of it is difficult and dangerous. We cannot wish such waste away. We cannot say that such waste should be elsewhere and turn our back on the problem. We must face up to those responsibilities. We are clear that, on the basis of a great deal of preparatory work, consultation and discussion, together with the consideration given to the problem by my hon. Friend and the Select Committee on the Environment, we are bringing forward proposals that will ensure that our waste is dealt with in a way that befits this nation as we move towards the turn of the century.

I want to thank my hon. Friend for his work in respresenting his constituents. He is a vigilant and valiant champion of his constituents. The number of times he keeps Ministers up late at night or early in the morning and the number of times that he brings delegations or makes contact with my right hon. and hon. Friends is legion. His constituents are truly fortunate to have a Member of Parliament who works so hard on their behalf. As my hon. Friend said, he plans to see my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government in the morning. That does not surprise me. He is a Member of Parliament who is a credit to his constituents and a credit to the House. I hope, as I have said, that as we move towards legislation on this important subject, we shall continue to have the benefit of his advice and experience.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 13 July 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

INTERNATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order read for consideration of Lords amendments.
To be considered on Thursday 20 July.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (BECKTON) BILL *[LORDS] (BY ORDER)*

Order read for consideration of Lords amendments.
To be considered on Tuesday 18 July.

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question —[23 May]—That the Bill be now read the Third time.
Debate to be resumed on Thursday 20 July.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (PENALTY FARES) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for further consideration, as amended, read.
To be further considered on Thursday 20 July.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*

BROMLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL (CRYSTAL PALACE) BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 20 July.

LONDON UNDERGROUND (VICTORIA) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL *(By Order)*

VALE OF GLAMORGAN (BARRY HARBOUR) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 20 July.

HAYLE HARBOUR BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

QUEEN MARY AND WESTFIELD COLLEGE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
Read a Second time, and committed.

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the King's Cross Railways Bill shall have leave to suspend proceeding thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words 'under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)' were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed on Tuesday 18 July at Seven o'clock.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Gaelic Broadcasting

1. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further discussions he has had with broadcasters in Scotland on future options for Gaelic television.

3. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met Comunn Na Gaidhlig to discuss Gaelic television.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I have had a number of discussions with broadcasters in Scotland during the course of this year, and with Comunn Na Gaidhlig in September of last year, about the provision of television and radio programmes in the Gaelic language. More recently, officials have met Comunn Na Gaidhlig and other interested parties to discuss this subject.

Mr. Macdonald: Has the Minister had time to read the System 3 poll in today's issue of *The Scotsman*, which shows support from two thirds of the people of Scotland for increased Gaelic broadcasting? Does he recognise the support that there is from Scottish Members on both sides of the House for the principle of a Gaelic broadcasting council, as suggested by Comunn Na Gaidhlig, and modelled on the Peacock recommendations that so influenced the Government's own plans? Will the Government take up Comunn Na Gaidhlig's imaginative idea and establish a Gaelic broadcasting council that will put Gaelic broadcasting on a new footing for the future?

Mr. Renton: Yes, I read the result of that poll in today's issue of *The Scotsman*, and I am well aware of the many comments made by Scottish Members in the broadcasting debate in the Scottish Grand Committee two days ago. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will consider carefully current views about increased Gaelic broadcasting, be it television or radio.

Mrs. Michie: I am delighted that the Minister met Comunn Na Gaidhlig. When he next visits Tiree, will he discuss with the people their support for the provision of Gaelic television broadcasting? Does he accept that 10 hours a week is the absolute minimum for a basic Gaelic television service? Will he take a bold initiative to secure the future of the Gaelic language?

Mr. Renton: I expect that the next time that I am, with permission, in the hon. Lady's constituency and on the isle of Tiree, I shall hear representations about the provision of Gaelic broadcasting. When I was last on Tiree I received particular representations about the use of Gaelic in Schools, and I am delighted that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is making available £850,000 this year for that purpose. I point out to the hon. Lady, who is very interested in the subject, that the 1988 report of Scottish Television—the largest independent television company in Scotland—comments:

"One in 100 of our viewers is a Gaelic speaker, and we maximised our service to them by showing programmes made by both Grampian and ourselves."

If Scottish broadcasters are really convinced of the need for more Gaelic programmes, one would have thought that they would go out of their way to produce them.

Mr. Holt: Will my hon. Friend say exactly how many Scottish Members can speak Gaelic?

Mr. Renton: I can say to my hon. Friend "ceud mille failte", which means a hundred thousand greetings. That is about the limit of my Gaelic. Opposition Members must tell the House how many of them speak Gaelic. Only 82,000 of the Scottish population of 5·2 million speak Gaelic, which is about 1·5 per cent.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Does the Minister accept that this is not merely a matter of who does or does not speak Gaelic? The Scottish community is united in wishing to see the regeneration of that part of our culture. Does he also accept that as £13 million has left Scotland to fund the Welsh channel and as our Welsh counterparts would not wish their advantage to be our disadvantage, a similar level of investment in Gaelic broadcasting in Scotland would ensure that we could regenerate our language?

Mr. Renton: I understand what the hon. Lady says and I should be the last to belittle Scottish interest in regenerating the Gaelic language. There were some 1,400 hours of radio broadcasts in Gaelic last year, although the number of television hours fell from about 114 to 77. The broadcasters must have their fingers on the pulse—that goes for the BBC as well as the independent companies—of Scottish requirements. If they thought that there was a strong need, particularly for more television in Gaelic, they would go out of their way to satisfy that demand.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Am I right in estimating mathematically, from what my hon. Friend has said, that there are about 150,000 Gaelic speakers? That compares with several million cockney speakers. What will he do to arrange a separate television channel for cockneys?

Mr. Renton: That is an extremely dangerous question for a Member like myself who lives in Sussex to answer. Many ethnic minorities in Scotland would be interested in programmes in their languages, particularly with the development of community radio. The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) did not say that we are looking into the arrangements for S4C in Welsh.

Mr. Darling: Does the Minister realise that over the past few years great strides have been made in promoting the speaking of Gaelic, not as some special obscure subject but as part of day-to-day life? Does he accept that television is one of the greatest influences on culture and that there is a need for a structured Gaelic broadcasting council, as proposed by Comunn Na Gaidhlig, to promote Gaelic? Or, is his attitude that Gaelic broadcasting should be shuffled off into the night hours as a result of the pressures of the market place and that if it cannot be made to pay, it does not matter?

Mr. Renton: I have in front of me the Labour policy document on broadcasting, "Broadcasting in a free society", which has just been produced. I see nothing in it about broadcasting in Gaelic. Doubtless the hon. Gentleman played a considerable part in writing it.

Police Stations (Metropolitan District)

2. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the physical condition of police stations within the Metropolitan police district.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The receiver for the Metropolitan police district wrote to the Home Department on this subject on 26 June 1987. The Metropolitan police estate was also the subject of a report published by the National Audit Office on 22 June 1989.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my hon. Friend for his response. Is he aware of the poor physical conditions of several Metropolitan police stations, particularly Bexleyheath station, and that such poor facilities could result in a lack of efficiency and morale in the police force?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is right to focus on Bexleyheath. I accept that it is coming to the end of its useful life. I hope that we shall be able to provide capital allocations for the purchase of a new site in due course. My hon. Friend put the question persuasively.

Mr. Cox: Is the Minister aware of the importance of this question? Despite repeated promises by him and other Ministers in his Department, remand prisoners are still kept in police cells and women prisoners in particular are kept in the most deplorable conditions, lacking washing and exercise facilities. That should be of great concern to the Minister.

Mr. Hogg: It has indeed been a problem. I am glad to say, however, that we have substantially reduced the number of prisoners in police cells in the south-east. The precise figure is not in my head, but it is between 20 and 40.

Crime Prevention

4. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the work of the ministerial group on crime prevention.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The ministerial group on crime prevention manages our successful crime prevention strategy. Its recently published progress report records how it does this: the prototype crime-free car, the reduction by over a third in the number of coin meter break-ins and the programme of Government-funded security measures for passengers on the London Underground are just three examples of initiatives which it supervises.

Mr. Hind: My right hon. Friend's ministerial group is doing excellent work, and many Conservative Members have noticed the drop of 6 per cent. in recorded crime in the past 12 months. Will my right hon. Friend remember, however, that crime prevention can be achieved in a number of ways?

There is widespread concern in the north-west following the trial of David Evans at Chester Crown court and his conviction for the murder of a 15-year-old girl. Evans had been released from prison after serving seven years of a 10-year sentence for rape: he received full remission. My right hon. Friend will be aware of Lord Carlisle's excellent report on the review of the parole system. Will he look carefully at the recommendations for supervision of prisoners released on remission after being sentenced for serious offences, in an attempt to prevent the repetition of cases such as that of David Evans?

Mr. Hurd: Yes. Personally, I have considerable sympathy with that recommendation by the Carlisle committee. We are examining the recommendations coherently and as a whole, and of course a change in the law will be needed.

My hon. Friend will know that offenders are already placed under supervision if they are released on parole. David Evans was refused parole, as are nearly all serious offenders serving five years or more; he was released when he could no longer be lawfully held in prison. The case certainly adds weight to my hon. Friend's suggestion, although it should be realised that supervision is not and cannot be a guarantee against a new offence being committed.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Home Secretary agree that crime prevention is wider than the simple act of dealing with matters such as break-ins? Does he agree that experience in America has shown the value of educational programmes, particularly in respect of crimes connected with drug abuse? Might not such programmes, perhaps funded by the Home Office supported by the Department of Education and Science, be explored as a means of preventing young people from becoming involved with addictive drugs?

Mr. Hurd: Indeed, they must be explored. The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right. It is not simply a matter of enforcing the law, although that is very important: a reduction in demand for drugs—heroin, cocaine or "crack"—through education of the young in particular is crucial, perhaps even more important than law enforcement.

Metropolitan Police

5. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress his Department is making towards securing greater value for money from the Metropolitan police service.

Mr. Hurd: My Department and the Metropolitan police are working hard to improve the use of resources and to secure better value for money. Measures have included a continuing programme of civilianisation, efficiency scrutinies and contracting-out of services, and Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary will now conduct independent inspections of the Metropolitan police.

Mrs. Gorman: Can my right hon. Friend give us some idea of the progress that has been made in the past three years in civilianising clerical jobs in the Metropolitan police force and contracting out other non-police work? According to the audit report, less than 25 per cent. of police time is spent policing out on the job, in the case of inspectors the figure is as little as 40 per cent. Most of their time is spent in the station doing clerical work.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. Much has been done, and much remains to be done. Between 1 April 1985 and March this year more than 400 police officers were released for operational duties because of civilianisation,

and I have authorised 200 additional civil staff this financial year to release 200 more officers. There is a similar story on contracting out. One result of such activity is that the hours spent on street duty by London's uniformed police officers rose by 9 per cent. last year.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has the Home Secretary read the National Audit Office report which outlines innumerable examples of poor estate management by the Metropolitan police? What action does he intend to take, or must policemen in the London area still work in Victorian conditions without any understanding by the Home Secretary of their problems, with the resultant effects on morale?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department has already answered a question on that precise point. We have a programme for improving and modernising police stations, particularly in London. I hope that some of the new capital spending arrangements that are coming into effect will enable the Met to do more than it has done already.

Mr. David Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the number of fingerprint officers were to be increased, the crime detection rate would be higher? Is he aware that only 40,000 out of 2 million crimes where fingerprints were left behind were solved in that way?

Mr. Hurd: There has been concern about the pace at which the new techniques are being introduced. It is something that I am reviewing.

Mr. Hattersley: Is the system of screening, by which the importance of 999 calls is assessed before they are answered, intended to make the Metropolitan police force more cost effective? What proportion of 999 calls are not answered as a result of screening?

Mr. Hurd: I cannot answer the right hon. Gentleman's latter point without notice, but I shall certainly let him know. I am glad to correct a misleading figure that has appeared in the newspapers—that only 15 per cent. of reported crimes are screened in. The figure is just about double that—30 per cent. I do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman would disagree with the principle that the police should devote resources to solving crimes where they have a reasonable chance of locating the criminal because there are clues. No crimes are screened out by category. Crimes are screened out when there is no particular clue or reason to suppose that the offender can be located. I think that the public understand that.

"A Criminal Code for England and Wales"

6. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the report of the Law Commission No. 177: "A Criminal Code for England and Wales".

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Law Commission's report has only recently been presented to Parliament. The Government are at present studying its proposals.

Mr. Maclennan: The Minister will be aware that his father was not satisfied with that answer in another place. Does he acknowledge that these proposals, conceived when my right hon. Friend Lord Jenkins of Hillhead was Home Secretary 21 years ago, have truly come of age? Does he accept, in the words of the Law Commission, that it is crucial to the liberty of the individual and the protection of society that people should easily have access to the criminal law? Does he also accept that their implementation would save time and money and would modernise the criminal law by making it more accessible, comprehensible, consistent and certain?

Mr. Hogg: I certainly agree that the report was produced by a team of extremely distinguished contributors, both lawyers and academics. The report deserves the closest possible consideration by the Government, which it will be given. There are undoubtedly a substantial number of advantages in codification, but there are also some objections to be considered. We have to come to a balanced view, after full consideration.

Mr. Stanbrook: Will my hon. Friend remember that whereas the existing corpus of criminal law is, for the most part, pretty clear and understandable, the introduction of a totally new code, using new language and new concepts and even introducing changes of substance, as has been suggested by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), would lead to fiendish complexity and give employment only to the lawyers?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend has identified some of the problems that are foreseen. One could never codify the criminal law in its entirety. It is at least possible that one might inhibit the courts in their development of the criminal law. However, it is a distinguished report which deserves careful consideration.

Victims of Crime

7. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what resources the Government currently make available to those organisations concerned with counselling the victims of serious crimes against the person.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This year we are providing nearly £4 million to victim support, chiefly to enable local schemes to employ staff to organise their services. The schemes help the victims of a wide range of crimes, including serious crimes against the person. I understand that the Department of Health will this year give £25,000 to the London rape counselling and research project to support the national element of its work. Other organisations which receive Government grants may help victims of crime, but not as their primary function.

Mr. Patnick: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. In considering non-custodial offences, will the Government give priority to offenders having to pay victims?

Mr. Hogg: I regard this as an extremely important suggestion. As the House will know, the criminal law already makes provision for compensation to be paid by offenders in appropriate circumstances, and the courts will bear that consideration in mind.

Mr. Winnick: Although I believe strongly in bail, remission and parole, and have not changed my mind, is it not absolutely essential that careful consideration is given by the authorities before any of those apply to people charged with or convicted of violent offences, including rape? Bearing in mind what the Home Secretary

said a few moments ago, does the Minister recognise that the public needs to be reassured about these matters, after some very disturbing cases?

Mr. Hogg: Unusually, I am in considerable sympathy with the hon. Gentleman. The criteria set out in the Bail Act 1976 are about right and certainly take account of the anxieties that he has expressed.

Mr. Greg Knight: With serious crimes, is there not a good case for ensuring that the criminal is subject to effective supervision when he is released from prison, as was identified in the Carlisle report?

Mr. Hogg: That is an extremely interesting suggestion which deserves the fullest consideration.

Free Television Licences

8. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further representations he has received seeking legislation to provide free television licences for all retirement pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Since I last replied to a question from the hon. Member on this subject on 7 June, we have received one letter, referred to us by an hon. Member, seeking free television licences for retirement pensioners.

Mr. Skinner: The truth is that the many pensioners involved in this almighty muddle, with a few receiving free television licences and millions not, are tired of writing to the Government because they know that they are so hard-hearted that they will not respond, so they ask Labour Members of Parliament to raise the matter in the House of Commons. Is the Minister aware that in the past 10 years pensioners have been robbed of £600 a year by the Government since they broke the link with earnings? That would pay for nearly 10 television licences. When the Home Secretary gets the sack from the Prime Minister, he will pick up £7,000. He will be able to pay for televisions and licences for the rest of his life.

Mr. Renton: This is the fourth time that the hon. Gentleman has asked me that question this Session. He sounds increasingly like a cracked record with the needle stuck in the groove. I give him the same answer as before. We do not believe that television licences are a proper instrument of social policy. Free television licences for pensioners would cost about £400 million, which would mean an increase of about half for everyone else. Many in need would not benefit. The right way to help those in need is through the pensions and benefits system, not through television licences.

Mr. Kilfedder: A real sense of grievance is felt by pensioners who have to pay the full television licence fee when they see their neighbours paying the lesser fee. Is the Minister aware that the problem has been worsened as in some cases pensioners who live in accommodation under the control of a warden have to pay the full licence fee, whereas their predecessors paid the smaller fee?

Mr. Renton: I am aware of the problems to which my hon. Friend refers. As he knows, last year we considered the adjustment of the concessionary licences. We produced a scheme that was intended to go back to the original intention—helping those in residential nursing homes or accommodation attended by a full-time warden. At the same time we continue to give the concession for all those who previously benefited from it. It is not perfect, but it is the best that could be devised in a scheme that was increasingly becoming full of holes.

Mr. Vaz: Is the Minister aware that, on 23 June this year, the day that the Home Secretary visited Leicester, the 3,000th Leicestershire pensioner signed a petition—which, incidentally, was launced by my mother, who is a pensioner—calling for free television licences for pensioners? As Minister with responsibility for broadcasting the hon. Gentleman has access in his offices to television sets without having to pay for a licence. Television is the only form of entertainment for many pensioners. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that his meanness in denying them a free television licence means that they are denied their only form of entertainment?

Mr. Renton: Of course, everyone realises that pensioners, like many others, depend a great deal on television, but the hon. Gentleman is echoing the nonsense in the Labour party's proposals for broadcasting. The Labour party says, and I assume that the hon. Gentleman supports it, that the licence fee should remain the main source of the BBC's income. At the same time, however, the hon. Gentleman suggests that low-income groups and pensioners should be exempted from the licence fee. That would mean that the licence fee would have to increase by at least half for everyone else—from £66 to over £101. That is Labour party policy. It is not just an election bribe; it is a penalty.

Passports

10. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made with his proposal to create an executive agency for the issuing of passports.

Mr. Hurd: Draft proposals have been prepared as a basis for consultation with other Government Departments and the trade unions concerned. A change of status would make it easier to incorporate relevant private sector experience, and I am keen to see this done to the maximum possible extent.

Mr. Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that delays in issuing passports in Liverpool have caused applicants in the north considerable inconvenience and anxiety? The prospect of executive agency status, which would bring a much clearer definition of executive responsibility, has been on the agenda for over a year. Can my right hon. Friend tell the House when he expects to set a timetable for implementation of this policy and what part setting a deadline for the computer system to be fully operational will play in that?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right about the delays, which were made much worse in Liverpool by the recent strike, which, I am happy to say, is now over. The staff concerned are now working to reduce the arrears. I should like to set this agency change in hand as quickly as I can. Certain consultations must take place, and they are being undertaken. My hon. Friend is right—computerisation throughout the passport offices and a change to agency basis are two long-term solutions to this problem.

Mr. Worthington: Year after year, we have long delays at the passport offices and, year after year, we have promises that this will end, but that has not happened this year. Again there were long queues in Glasgow. It is impossible to get through by telephone to the Glasgow passport office. Why does not the right hon. Gentleman accept that there must be an expansion of staff resources —never mind computerisation—to deal with the predictable surge in passport demand every summer?

Mr. Hurd: It would not have been sensible to do what the union required, which was to employ large numbers of extra permanent staff for a service that ebbs and flows. We have reached agreement with the union on that aspect. I agree that the service to the public must be substantially improved. A long-term solution depends upon a mixture of two things—computerisation, which has started in Glasgow, and a change in the nature of management, bringing to the greatest possible extent the relevant experience of the private sector to the passport offices.

Mr. Gow: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, apart from the recent industrial action in the passport offices, the system of issuing passports and dealing with queries has been massively incompetent for years? Is my right hon. Friend aware that, if he applied his formidable intellect to resolving the existing problems, which are certain to continue unless his reforms are implemented, this matter could be put right once and for all within three months?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that my hon. Friend is quarrelling with the ultimate objective or with the two ways that I have suggested of meeting it. Certainly, they are preferable to continuing as we have in recent years. The immediate task is to clear up after the recent industrial action and to reduce the arrears. We are doing that partly by overtime, partly by employing extra temporary staff, and partly by a limited increase in the number of permanent staff. In the short term, that is the only way of improving the service to the public. In the longer term, we must act more drastically, as I have suggested.

Mr. Randall: The whole House, as well as the public, could almost certainly have anticipated the problems that we have had this year. Home Office figures in the past have demonstrated the way in which demand has been outstripping the capacity to deal with them. Does the Home Secretary agree that this is a serious example of bad management in the passport office? During the introduction of the computer system, should he not have ensured that enough staff were available to deal with any contingencies and delays?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is entitled to say that, particularly when a large part of the public's recent misery has been brought about by the Civil and Public Servants Association and the action that it took in Liverpool. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members would not expect me to staff up the passport office to deal with bloody-mindedness on the part of the union. I agree that the long-term future includes a basic change in the way in which the passport office is manned.

Mr. Soames: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge the real rage of some of our constituents who, in 1989, find it impossible to travel on their holidays or to go to the United States of America, purely because of the incompetence of the passport office? Will he assure the House that, whatever steps he intends to take, which the whole House will believe are entirely laudable, he will see that the reforms are pressed through with great vigour so that our constituents will no longer be so grossly inconvenienced?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed. This is an example of a public service that has fallen below the level that the public should expect. There is a long history to it, which we can debate on another occasion. *[Interruption.]* I believe that we have now found, and are now putting into effect through computerisation, the correct answers. As my hon. Friend suggested, I intend to press on with all energy.

Mr. Albert Baker

11. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is yet able to make a further statement as to the case of Mr. Albert Baker.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are considering Mr. Baker's application for permanent transfer to Northern Ireland. We shall reach a decision as soon as possible.

Mr. Livingstone: Does the Minister agree that, given that Albert Baker has now been in prison for over 15 years —admittedly for four horrifying sectarian murders of quite innocent Catholics—there is now growing suspicion that the constant refusal to make any move on the case of Albert Baker is related to the fact that he has begun to name those members of the security forces and the RUC who provided the weapons that he used in the murders, and that there is now an interest on the part of the Government to keep him inside for as long as possible so that those matters will not be properly aired when Albert Baker gets out?

Mr. Hogg: I have always noted that, when the hon. Gentleman gets to his feet, he brings discredit upon himself. The only reason why, hitherto, a refusal has been given is because the Northern Ireland Office has concluded that he would be at risk in the general prison system in Northern Ireland and that, by reason of his behaviour, he is unfit to be housed in the special unit. We are looking at the matter again, and he will be told the decision shortly.

Hong Kong

12. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to meet the Governor of Hong Kong to discuss immigration issues.

Mr. Hurd: I have no present plans for a further meeting with the Governor whom I last saw in London on 8 June. But I am in constant touch with my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, who was in Hong Kong between 2 and 4 July and who is himself in close touch with the Government of Hong Kong.

Mr. Dalyell: From his own experience of Peking, does the Home Secretary accept that, throughout Chinese history, whatever their domestic agonies have been, they have at least respected their international agreements?

Is the Home Secretary aware that some of us think that at this time, of all times, trade missions and other contacts should go ahead not only for our good and the opening up of China, but for the good of the people of Hong Kong and for the students who died in Tiananmen square?

Mr. Hurd: The House will debate this matter this afternoon. It goes well beyond my responsibilities, but I am quite sure that we need to assume, and work for, the reality of the Chinese honouring their promises in regard to Hong Kong.

Mr. Dykes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that over-excited comparisons with Portugal and their provisions for Macao are not justified, because the people there who have automatic right of entry to Portugal, and therefore to the EEC, number only just in excess of 100,000? After the Foreign Secretary's declaration during his recent visit, there is plenty of time to work out, in a calm atmosphere, a rational solution for the people who wish genuinely to apply to come to this country. Is it not self-evident that priority categories should include people who have connections with Britain, who work here and who travel between here and Hong Kong frequently?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right about numbers. Our citizenship law since 1981 has been based firmly on residency, as Portugal's has not. The thrust of the second part of my hon. Friend's question is, I think, right. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and I are trying to work out ways in which the existing arrangements can be made more flexible so that key people in the public and private sectors can be given assurances of one kind or another which will encourage them to stay in Hong Kong.

Mr. Hattersley: Has the Home Secretary noticed that there is a feeling of revulsion throughout the country at the idea that some citizens of Hong Kong may be able to buy their way into Britain because they possess £150,000? Will he repudiate that principle for Hong Kong immigrants and for immigrants from other parts of the Commonwealth?

Mr. Hurd: The principle of people coming here with adequate means has been established for a long time, including under a Labour Government. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman to this extent any scheme that we work out—we are working on a scheme as I have just said —cannot simply be based on the principle that those with the longest purses have the greatest rights.

Mr. Maclennan: Did the Home Secretary hear the words of the Governor of Hong Kong who made it plain that, if the right of abode were granted as a last resort to British dependent territory passport holders, there would not be the sudden influx which appears to be what is worrying the Government about meeting their moral obligations in this matter?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that the House of Commons would welcome it if the Government came to the House with a proposition based on that assumption, which we simply could not prove. If we suggest that the right of abode should, at least in theory, be given to a large number of people—3 million, 3·25 million or 5 million—I think that a responsible House of Commons and a responsible Government would need to consider the possibility of that right being taken up. I do not think that we can seriously discuss such a proposal without making that assumption.

Remand Prisoners

13. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of people held on remand in prison on the latest available date; and what it was 12 months ago?

Mr. Hurd: At the end of May this year, 10,540 prisoners were held on remand in prisons or in police cells. I am glad to say that that is 1,040 fewer than 12 months ago.

Mr. Bowis: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Assuming that they have not all escaped, that is rather good news. Does he have equally good news relating to remand prisoners held in police cells because a year ago they were keeping the police from their proper duty of guarding the streets of London and elsewhere?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed, I do. My hon. Friend is right. At its worst, roughly 2,000 remand prisoners were held in police cells each night. The latest figure, for earlier this week, was 194, of whom 160 are in the north, because of the recent disturbances at Risley, and of whom only 34 are in the metropolitan area and the south-east. That is a big improvement.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is the Home Secretary aware that the figures that he has just given include young remand prisoners at Armley prison in Leeds and that there have been a number of suicides among these young men? Is he satisfied that the conditions in that prison are suitable for young remand prisoners?

Mr. Hurd: It will be a long time before I am satisfied that, despite all the efforts, the conditions in Armley prison are suitable for any prisoner, whether convicted or on remand. The hon. Gentleman knows that because we have discussed it. We have a long way to go before prisons such as Armley are in a satisfactory state. All that one can say is that over the past year there has been a great deal of progress.

Chief Constable (Lancashire)

15. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the chief constable of Lancashire; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend last met the chief constable of the Lancashire constabulary at the Association of Chief Police Officers' drugs conference in April, when they discussed a number of matters of mutual interest. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State met the chief constable and members of the police authority on 11 July, to discuss police manpower and the costs of security arrangements at party conferences in Blackpool.

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for that information. Can he confirm to the House the excellent progress that the Lancashire police force is making in increasing its crime protection rate to 49 per cent., while reducing the incidence of burglaries by 10 per cent. and implementing neighbourhood watch schemes? In the light of that excellent performance, can he give me the reassurance that he will take a broad range of representations into account when Lancashire next requests more police officers to further its excellent work?

Mr. Hogg: I think, perhaps, that the Lancashire constabulary does not have a more persuasive friend than my hon. Friend.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Bendall:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 July.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is attending the economic summit in Paris.

Mr. Bendall: Has my right hon. Friend had the opportunity to look at the statement made recently by President Bush in Hungary? Does he agree that the western technology and finance that is now going behind the iron curtain will result, in time, in the rolling-back of the iron curtan and the end of 40 years of impoverishment for Communist countries?

Mr. Wakeham: I have. On this, as on so many other issues, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Bush share a common outlook and approach. The House will recall that when the Polish president visited Britain recently my right hon. Friend was able to announce a package of help for Poland on its road to democracy and free markets, of very much the same kind as that which President Bush launched during the successful visit that he has just concluded to eastern Europe.

Q2. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 July.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Leader of the House tell the Secretary of State for Transport to stop sabotaging the talks between the trade unions and British Rail? The trade unions represent railmen on less than £100 per week while the chairman of British Rail is on £100,000. While he is about it, will he ask Maurice Saatchi of Saatchi and Saatchi plc who has just received an increase of £125,000 per year from £500,000 to £625,000, to donate a bit of time to a public information campaign to demonstrate that when there are strikes on the railways it is the fault of the Government who are pulling the strings of the puppet BR management?

Mr. Wakeham: I entirely refute the hon. Gentleman's accusation that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has intervened in the strike. He certainly has not. The strike hurts everybody and benefits no one. It causes misery to commuters in London and other big cities. It hits old people and children who are particularly dependent on public transport. In my view, the unions should stop it, go back to work and negotiate with the management.

Q3. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 April.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dunn: Is the Leader of the House aware that British Rail's proposal to build a high-speed rail link in my constituency will have a massively damaging effect on five villages with no benefit whatsoever for local commuters or residents? Is he further aware that British Rail has a solution at its disposal, which is to give an undertaking to provide a further five miles of tunnelling and that if that undertaking were given and the five miles of tunnelling were provided, local opposition would largely be withdrawn?

Mr. Wakeham: I am aware of my hon. Friend's continuing concern about British Rail's proposal. British Rail's route, which was announced in March, will have significantly less impact on people and the environment than its original routes options. British Rail clearly took on board many of the suggestions put to it during the consultations. I recognise that my hon. Friend is not entirely satisfied with the changes that British Rail agreed. I hope that he will continue to pursue his concern direct with British Rail. I assure him, however, that before British Rail can proceed, it will have to convince Parliament that a new line is needed and that it has minimised the impact on people and the environment.

Mr. Kinnock: In his earlier reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), was the right hon. Gentleman seriously saying that British Rail, in its response to the pay recommendations by the arbitration tribunal, was not acting upon the advice of the Government?

Mr. Wakeham: I am absolutely saying that. I am saying that this is a dispute which is for the management of British Rail and for the trade unions to resolve. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has given it neither instructions nor guidance.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the right hon. Gentleman reflect on that answer? Is he seriously asking anyone to believe that the Secretary of State for Transport, in those circumstances, can meet the chairman of British Rail on Tuesday and the one thing that they do not talk about is the response that the Government want to the arbitration recommendations? Is that not stretching belief beyond all possible credulity?

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told the House on Monday that he was seeing the chairman of British Rail on Tuesday, which he did. He discussed a number of matters with him. There was no question of the Government giving any guidance or instructions.

While the right hon. Gentleman is on the subject, he might have a word with his hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who one day says that the Government should intervene and the next day that the Government should keep out of it. Why does he not make up his mind?

Mr. Kinnock: The constant demand from the Opposition is that the Government should intervene constructively. That, too, is the demand of the travelling public. It disgraces the Government that they will not do that. Will the right hon. Gentleman give us here and now the absolute undertaking that the Government will in no

circumstances make any intervention that will in any sense tie the hands of British Rail and prevent it from freely negotiating a proper bargain with the rail unions?

Mr. Wakeham: I remind the right hon. Gentleman—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer".] I shall answer the right hon. Gentleman. I shall remind him of something that was said the last time that we had a major rail strike.

"It is wholly unjustified, damaging to the long term prospects of the railways and inexcusable in the inconvenience that it is causing to the travelling public."

That was a quotation from the last Labour Transport Secretary. It is a pity that the right hon. Gentleman has not a shred of responsibility and does not condemn the strike.

Mr. Tebbit: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition were a perfect example of why it is difficult to get good quality managers to work in a nationalised industry? It is because they are perpetually being mucked around by politicians and would-be politicians, such as the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock). Would it not be more appropriate for the Leader of the Opposition to ring up his friend, Jimmy Knapp, and tell him to quit all the posturing and come to an agreement on pay, without forcing railway men to lose more money in future strikes?

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is no reason why the dispute cannot be brought to an end. It is for reasonable people to get together and to settle it.

Q4. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 July.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Skinner: Can the Leader of the House confirm that the Governor of the Bank of England has called the leading banks to crisis talks in the next two or three days because of the massive increase in lending to the property market? Is he aware that yesterday's figures show that property lending is at the highest ever recorded figure—worse than during the Barber boom—at 14 per cent.? If that lending continues those banks will have to lend money so that the institutions can pay back just the interest, which has gone through the roof during the past few days. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that in 1972 when we had the last Barber boom, it resulted in the then Government being kicked from office? The chances are that that is what will happen to this one.

Mr. Wakeham: I can confirm no such thing. I can confirm, however, that the summit countries are meeting in Paris and that the Prime Minister will be able to say that in the 1980s investment was growing faster in this country than in any other European country, that we have created more jobs than other European countries and that we have more people in work than ever before. We have a record rate of new business formations, and British business and industry have enjoyed better conditions and sound investment during the past few years than ever before. That is much more relevant to the real world than the machinations of the hon. Gentleman's mind.

Q5. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 July.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Patnick: Will my right hon. Friend join me in expressing sympathy to the graduates of university of Sussex whose ceremony yesterday was disrupted by picketing by members of the National and Local Government Officers Association? Does he further agree that the words of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) who said, expletive deleted, that the union would be better joining the Labour party, will not resolve the dispute?

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly share my hon. Friend's view. All those who were deprived of essential social services yesterday and children whose nurseries were closed by NALGO action deserve full sympathy. I even have some sympathy for the spot of bother experienced by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), but I think that the Labour party hardly needs another paymaster as it is already in hock to enough unions.

Mr. McAllion: Is the Minister aware that the number of young men committing suicide between the age of 20 and 24 has jumped by more than 60 per cent. during the past decade of mass unemployment? The Government, however, have carried out no research into any relationship between mass unemployment and the increase in the suicide rate. Are we to assume that the Government are not even interested in finding out the all too tragic consequences of their misuse of mass unemployment as a legitimate economic tool of management?

Mr. Wakeham: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would therefore welcome today's announcement of a further fall in unemployment of 26,000 in June. That means that the figure has been falling continuously for 35 months. The hon. Gentleman should also note that the age group to which he referred has experienced the largest fall in unemployment.

Q6. **Sir Hal Miller:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 July.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Hal Miller: Will my right hon. Friend reflect further on the NALGO strike as another example of people inflicting maximum inconvenience on the public at minimum disadvantage to themselves? Surely that throws doubt on that union's professed wish to care for the public. Does it not further call into question the wisdom of our entrusting the care of the community to such people and their political masters?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes his point extremely well. The people who have gone on strike have hurt the public, lost money themselves and gained absolutely nothing.

Mr. Janner: Does the Leader of the House, who does travel by train, unlike the Prime Minister, recognise, as the public most certainly do, that the railwaymen's dispute over pay and conditions is entirely genuine? Does he not appreciate that British Rail has mishandled the dispute from beginning to end and that Government and ministerial statements amount to intervention of the worst

and most divisive kind? Did the Secretary of State for Transport discuss this matter with the chairman of British Rail when he met him?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot keep repeating the answer, but I shall do so for the hon. and learned Gentleman for whom I have a great affection. I said that my right hon. Friend had a meeting with the chairman of British Rail and that they discussed many matters. However, my right hon. Friend did not give guidance or instructions to British Rail.

Q7. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 July.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: In view of a recent court case, would my right hon. Friend consider making changes in the parole system to ensure that compulsive rapists are retained for their full prison sentence? Will he explain what has happened to the Carlisle report which has, apparently, been languishing on somebody's desk in the Home Office since November?

Mr. Wakeham: I can explain the position to my hon. Friend and sympathise with his question. The idea of having more supervision for serious offenders after their release is one of the recommendations of the Carlisle committee, which needs to be looked at as a whole. They would require a change in the law. Offenders are already placed under supervision if they are released on parole. David Evans was refused parole, as are almost all serious offenders serving five years or more. However, he was released when he had served his sentence minus the statutory remission when he could no longer be lawfully held in prison. This tragic case adds weight to the argument for a change in the law. Supervision could help, but it could not guarantee that a new offence would not be committed.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Leader of the House state the business of the House for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 17 JULY—Timetable motion on the Football Spectators Bill *[Lords]*.

Remaining stages of the Antarctic Minerals Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion on the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order.

Motion on the Clergy (Ordination) Measure.

TUESDAY 18 JULY—Opposition Day (17th Allotted Day). Until seven o'clock there will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "Teacher Shortages".

Motion to take note of EC documents on animal health aspects of intra-Community trade. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

WEDNESDAY 19 JULY—Until about seven o'clock motions on Water Act regulations. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Consideration of Lords amendments to the Social Security Bill.

Consideration of Lords amendments to the Transport (Scotland) Bill.

THURSDAY 20 JULY—Progress on consideration of Lords amendments to the Electricity Bill.

Motion on the Education (Assisted Places) Regulations.

FRIDAY 21 JULY—There will be a debate on school education against drug and alcohol abuse on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 24 JULY—Until seven o'clock completion of consideration of Lords amendments to the Electricity Bill.

There will be a debate on parliamentary pensions on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Mr. Speaker, the House will wish to know that, subject to the progress of business, it will be proposed that the House should rise for the summer Adjournment on Friday 28 July until Tuesday 17 October.

[Tuesday 18 July

Relevant European Community Documents

(a) 4183/89; 4839/89; 5057/89 Health rules: sheep and goats, bovine embryos and poultry.

Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee.

(a) HC 15-xxv (1988-89), para 2.

Wednesday 19 July:

Water Act Regulations

Control of Pollution (Revocations) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1150),

Controlled Waters (Lakes and Ponds) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1149),

Control of Pollution (Consents for Discharges etc.) (Secretary of State Functions) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1151),

Control of Pollution (Discharges by the National Rivers Authority) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1157),

Control of Pollution (Radioactive Waste) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1158),

Control of Pollution (Registers) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1160),

Director General of Water Services' Register (Inspection and Charges) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1154),

Surface Waters (Classification) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1148),

Trade Effluents (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1156),

Water and Sewerage (Conservation, Access and Recreation) (Code of Practice) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1152),

Water Reorganisation (Pensions etc.) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1161)

Water Reorganisation (Pensions etc.) (Designated Persons) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1155),

Water Supply and Sewerage Services (Customer Service Standard) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1159),

Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1147),

Water Appointment (Monopolies and Mergers Commission) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1162).]

Mr. Dobson: When the Leader of the House says that we are to have a guillotine motion on Monday curtailing debate on the Football Spectators Bill, is he seriously suggesting that the House should finish the Committee stage of the Bill before the summer recess and months before the Taylor judicial inquiry has been completed? If that is the case, will he once again reconsider and reflect on the offer that the Opposition have made—that if he and his colleagues come up with a sensible measure to deal with the problem of hooliganism and crowd safety, the Opposition will give it a fair wind. If he does not agree to that, we promise that we shall do our level best to stop the Government from successfully steering the Bill through Parliament.

I understand that later in the week it is proposed that no fewer than 13 sets of Water Act regulations should be dealt with in three hours. Those regulations have been produced as a result of the passage of the Water Act, which passed into law only 10 days ago. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that there cannot possibly be any reasonable scrutiny of this subsidiary legislation and that the lack of proper scrutiny is likely to bring the House into disrepute? Will he find more time in which to consider these important regulations?

On what day will the Prime Minister make her statement about the Paris summit—or, if I know the French, the Paris festivities this weekend?

We understand from the newspapers that the Government have already decided their response to their Green Paper on the legal profession. Everyone else in the country has had the opportunity to make their views known. Do the Government intend to announce their decision before the House has had the chance to debate the proposals? If so, will the right hon. Gentleman remind his Cabinet colleagues that every penny piece paid to every lawyer in this country comes from the pockets or handbags of the constituents of those in this House, and that we have as much right as the legal profession to a say in this matter?

Referring back to last week's business questions and the points of order raised this week by my right hon. and hon. Friends representing Wales, will the right hon. Gentleman say whether and when we shall have a debate on the impact

[Mr. Dobson]

of the National Health Service review on Wales, or will he drag his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the Welsh Grand Committee and get him to produce the promised but as yet unavailable working papers on that impact?

Finally, we heard the Government's long-awaited response to the Griffiths report yesterday, but will the House have the opportunity to discuss the report and the Government's response to it before they come forward with a White Paper in the autumn?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman has asked me six questions about the business for next week.

I agree that there has been some progress in the Committee considering the Football Spectators Bill. These are important matters for consideration and tabling a motion, which I shall do later today, will give us a reasonable time in which to proceed and deal with those matters——

Mr. Dobson: Will the Committe stage finish before the recess?

Mr. Wakeham: I hope that the hon. Gentleman can wait until we table the motion later today.

As regards the important Taylor inquiry, we have made it clear that this is an enabling Bill—to enable the House to consider Lord Taylor's proposals before the Bill is put into operation.

Mr. Dobson: Thirteen regulations in three hours!

Mr. Wakeham: I propose to table a motion which will allow for a debate of three hours on the Water Act regulations. That would be for the general convenience of the House, but in view of what the hon. Gentleman has said I shall undertake to have more discussions through the usual channels.

To answer the hon. Gentleman's point about the legal Green Papers, my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor proposes to publish a White Paper. I cannot promise a debate before the White Paper is published, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that there will be plenty of opportunity to discuss any proposals that may be made.

The Welsh Grand Committee debate is a cause of some difficulty and I very much regret that it has not proved possible to agree a date for a debate on the National Health Service in Wales. I believe that that matter is best discussed through the usual channels.

The House heard the Government's response to the Griffiths report yesterday and will need time to consider the proposals in it. A White Paper will be published early in the autumn, so it might be more appropriate to hold the debate then. I agree that its exact timing is perhaps best left to discussion through the usual channels.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that apart from business questions today we have two statements and a debate in which no fewer than 36 right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate. Exceptionally, I shall have to limit business questions this afternoon. I am sure that all hon. Members' questions are very important, but I ask any hon. Member who might like to ask his question on another day to do so.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Did my right hon. Friend see the reports in the weekend papers that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was to demand a debate on the rail strike? As, yet again, the Opposition have chosen not to debate the subject when they have an opportunity to do so next Tuesday, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that many Conservative Members would like to discuss the attitude of the Opposition and the fact that they continue to be the strikers' friend and not the public's friend?

Mr. Wakeham: I have a certain amount of sympathy with any hon. Member who does not propose a debate on any subject, particularly in this fortnight, so for once I am afraid that my hon. Friend will not have me on his side. I will support the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who has not proposed that we should hold a debate.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will there be an opportunity for the Secretary of State for the Environment to make a statement on his proposed office of green information, so that we know whether this is a sign of freedom of information or just another attempt to massage the figures, as has happened over many months with unemployment?

Given that the Government were defeated in the Scottish Grand Committee this morning, when the Government Bench members split, will the Leader of the House provide time for a debate on the Floor of the House, for which many hon. Members in that debate called, so that many of the important issues facing the fishing industry can be discussed? In the meantime, perhaps the Government can come up with some answers to the pertinent questions raised in the debate.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not think that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has any plans to make a statement on the point that the hon. Gentleman raises—somewhat inaccurately, I think—and I have no plans for a debate on the fishing industry at the moment. There will have to be one, but it is better to wait until the 1990 proposals are available.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the upper House is debating the defence White Paper this afternoon. Can we expect to hold a similar debate before the summer recess?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sorry to say that I do not think that I can manage that before the summer recess, but I can arrange it early in the spillover period.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I should like to raise with the Leader of the House a serious problem that affects us in the city of Leeds. We now have a Leeds development corporation which cannot be questioned except on the Floor of the House. I have had complaints from at least 50 people in the Leeds development area who say that their land is to be taken away from them. On Tuesday that land is to be vested here by statutory instrument. There is a long list of these statutory instruments, affecting the black country, Leeds, Walsall, London, Newham and other places. Yet the debate is to last only an hour and a half.

The Government took those powers away from local government and chose to deal with these matters in this fashion. When my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds,

West (Mr. Battle) was chairman of the industry committee in Leeds, and chairman of the urban development committee, we could go to him and the matter was raised in the local authority. That has all gone. This process is completely undemocratic. Whatever the virtues of the people who have been appointed, something must be done about that.

I am the only Member representing Leeds who is to serve on the Committee, and the whole bang shoot will be dealt with in an hour and a half. We shall have to raise most important issues. I will not use the word "flooded" because 50 letters is not a flood, but we have received many letters from people who have set up businesses and whose property is to be compulsorily purchased. They are small businesses and there are strong feelings in Leeds about this and we have just an hour and a half to debate the whole lot. It is not good enough. Will the right hon. Gentleman do something about the number of orders to be dealt with on Tuesday morning?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot undertake to do that, but I shall have some discussions about the matter through the usual channels as the right hon. Gentleman has raised it. I cannot give him an undertaking, but I will look into the matter.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Is it not disappointing that my right hon. Friend has put the Clergy (Ordination) Measure on as the last business on Monday? Does he remember me saying to him last week that many hon. Members are likely to want to speak in that debate? Does that not put a considerable strain on the Chair, and will it not restrict the amount of time available for hon. Members to speak?

Mr. Wakeham: I regret that my hon. Friend feels that there is likely to be insufficient time, and I have some sympathy with his point of view, but this is a difficult time of year to fit everything in. I have done my best, and I am sorry if it does not meet with my hon. Friend's approval. I can look at the amount of time available to see whether any more can be found, but I cannot promise to find any more.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Will the Leader of the House reflect on early-day motion 879?

[That this House calls on the Government to accept the verdict of the electors of the Vale of Glamorgan who rejected the Government's plans to undermine the National Health Service; calls on the Government to accept that most people want more money to be spent on the Health Service and now realise that Britain is spending a smaller proportion of national income on health than most other advanced countries; notes the widespread anger that has been caused by the introduction of eyesight and dental test charges and the proposition that doctors should be turned into accountants; and consequently calls on the Government to withdraw the Health Service White Paper and the nine consultative documents published for England.]

Does he recall that last Monday he promised the House that he would seek the documents on the National Health Service in Wales that had been promised by the Secretary of State for Wales? Has he found those documents? If so, will he let us have them now so that we can discuss them?

Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that on 21 June he promised to try to persuade the Secretary of State for Wales to come to the Welsh Grand Committee and debate the National Health Service in Wales? In answer to my request that the debate be held before the recess, the Lord President said that he would do his best. Is his best not enough to persuade the Secretary of State for Wales to come to the Welsh Grand Committee to meet Welsh Members and debate the NHS? Are we not to have the necessary documents for that debate? Is the Secretary of State for Wales afraid to discuss the NHS in Wales?

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales would have welcomed such a debate, but it has not been possible to find a debate. I regret that I do not yet have the documents promised to the hon. Gentleman, and my inquiries on that matter are still proceeding. I have discussed the matter with my right hon. Friend and I have given the shadow Leader of the House an undertaking. I shall discuss the matter again through the usual channels. That is as much as I can promise.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): My right hon. Friend said that on Monday we would debate the ordination of the clergy, which I take to be the ordination of the divorced clergy. He will be aware that that matter is the subject of a legal challenge. I accept that as the motion has been tabled it must be in order, but does my right hon. Friend think it proper for the House to discuss that matter, the propriety and whole basis of which is the subject of legal action?

Mr. Wakeham: There are strict rules about such matters and I am sure that the House is acting in accordance with proper procedures. As my hon. Friend recognised, I should not otherwise have proposed it. I shall consider her point, but I do not think that it will alter my proposal.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Does the Leader of the House agree that there should be an urgent debate on the use and misuse of patronage, given that the British representative to the Council of Europe Committee on Human Rights, which is discussing the degradation and torture of prisoners, is to be none other than the former Member for Cardiff West, Mr. Stefan Terlezki—a man not renowned in this House for his libertarian views? Does that not show the Government's disdain for the important subject of human rights?

Mr. Wakeham: I consider that to be a most regrettable remark. My former colleague, who we hope will return to the House before long, is a distinguished man with a long record of great difficulties and persecutions. He will make a distinguished member of that Committee.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): Has my right hon. Friend taken note of early-day motion 1145, which appears on the Order Paper today and relates to the centenary of the Inter-Parliamentary Union?

[That this House recognises the centenary of the Inter-Parliamentary Union on 29th June and records its satisfaction on the placing of the bust of the late Sir William Randal Cremer, the British co-founder of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and the first backbencher so honoured in the Members' Lobby; further recognises that the occasion of the Centenary Conference to be held in London from 4th to 9th September will provide an opportunity for British parliamentarians to strengthen links with parliamentarians from 111 other elected countries; and looks to the

[Mr. Michael Marshall]

Inter-Parliamentary Union to continue the work of parliamentary diplomacy in the peaceful resolution of conflict during its next century.]

In the light of earlier questions to my right hon. Friend, and recognising procedural difficulties, does he think it appropriate to cover the exercise of parliamentary diplomacy in the peaceful resolution of conflict under what I understand to be the broad terms of tomorrow's debate on a motion for the Adjournment?

Mr. Wakeham: What is or is not in order is a matter not for me, but for Mr. Speaker. I am reasonably confident, and I very much hope, that during tomorrow's debate time will be found to acknowledge the IPU's continuing excellent work in bringing together the world's parliamentarians and the significance of its centenary year. I am aware of the magnificent programme being arranged for the IPU's centenary conference in September, in which my hon. Friend has played a distinguished part.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Will the Leader of the House find time next week to discuss an important matter which was omitted from the statement made yesterday by the Secretary of State for Health? Within the whole issue of community care, we must discuss the housing needs of those being rehabilitated into the community. Does not a great deal of money need to be spent on, for example, adaptations to houses, central heating, stairlifts, and so on? As the Secretary of State for Health refused to discuss that matter yesterday, will the Leader of the House repair his omission and arrange a debate on the important matter of community care?

Mr. Wakeham: There is a proper time for discussing financial matters. Negotiations are going on with the local authorities and the right time to discuss those in later in the year when the arrangements have been fully discussed with the local authorities. I have no doubt that there will be plenty of opportunities for discussing the matter.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): If my right hon. Friend talks by telephone to the Prime Minister in Paris today, will they reflect on the fact that it was rowdyism and ill-discipline in the original revolutionaries——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question must be about the business for next week.

Mr. Leigh: It was rowdyism that destroyed the original National Assembly. Given my right hon. Friend's responsibility for Short money, has he read the internal Labour party review report which refers to "rowdyism and indiscipline" on the Opposition Benches and the Labour party not being an organised political party? Is not that a matter of concern for our political freedom and for taxpayers' money?

Mr. Wakeham: I had enough difficulty settling the Short money and persuading the House that it was fair and reasonable not to want a further discussion on that in the immediate future, but I hope that Opposition Members have listened to my hon. Friend's wise words.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House again that we are under great pressure today and questions should be about next week's business.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I listened to the reply that the Leader of the House gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on the Welsh Grand Committee debate on the Health Service. Together with my colleagues from Wales, I am disgusted with the right hon. Gentleman's replies and promises over the past few weeks. If he wants to protect the back of the Secretary of State for Wales, he knows as well as the House knows that the Secretary of State for Wales has a responsibility to discuss matters of urgency with Welsh Members on occasions. The Health Service in Wales is a matter of urgency. It is no good sending the matter back to the usual channels because we are getting no response there. Will the Leader of the House make an exception and get the Secretary of State for Wales to come to the House next week or the week after so that we can debate the National Health Service in Wales?

May we also have an early debate—[HON. MEMBERS: "Briefly."]—on early-day motion 866, in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon), which deals with the 8 million obscene telephone calls made every year?

[That this House notes with concern the results of a gallup poll conducted by Channel 4 Television showing that every year over eight million obscene telephone calls are received by women in Britain and that every day more than two thousand of these calls also threaten violence, that a number of women terrorised by such repeated calls move house or have mental breakdowns, that nevertheless telephone companies and the police rarely give this matter priority or attempt to trace the offenders, that the penalty for sending obscene letters through the post, Malicious Communications Act 1988, is higher than for making obscene calls, Telecommunications Act 1984, that fifteen per cent. of the callers know the woman they call, though the woman may not know them, and that some rapists also make obscene calls which are themselves a form of violence and an invasion of privacy; and therefore asks the Home Secretary to set up an inquiry into the extent of this problem, to examine the work of the special department of Bell Telephone Incorporated of New Jersey, United States of America which helps victims trap offending callers, to take measures to improve the rate of detection and conviction of offenders and to take steps leading to the amendment of the said Telecommunications Act 1984 Section 43 increasing the penalty; and calls upon the Director General of Telecommunications to make a condition of granting licences to British Telecom and Mercury that they each set up a department at their own expense to trace obscene phone calls when requested to do so in writing by victims.]

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot add anything to what I have already said about the Welsh Grand Committee. I recognise that the hon. Gentleman feels strongly about that, but I have said what I have said and I have done the best that I can.

I understand the distress that may be caused by obscene telephone calls. British Telecom and Mercury are ready and willing to co-operate with any police inquiries. Complaints should be referred to the police. Parliament has already put in place a statutory protection in section 43 of the Telecommunications Act 1984. It is for the Director

General of Telecommunications to consider whether any licence amendments are needed. However, I will refer the matter to my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate next week to consider the need to review planning procedures and appeals in Northern Ireland? The matter is urgent because of the granting of outline planning permission for a large three-storey block of flats at Lyle road, Bangor in my constituency which, if allowed to proceed, will have an adverse effect on the environment and will greatly reduce the value of neighbouring houses.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that the hon. Gentleman speaks for his constituents, and I wish that I could give him a better response. I cannot promise a debate, but I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will be answering questions in the House next Thursday and the hon. Gentleman could pursue him then.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): As the House will be rising for the long summer recess in 15 days' time, and in view of the strikes in two major industries that have been directly caused by the policies pursued by the Government since 1979, which force trade unions to go to the courts rather than to the negotiating table, will the Leader of the House provide time next week for a debate on those two important disputes?

Hon. Members: Yes, please.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman joins a number of my hon. Friends in wishing for a debate, but I must say the same to him as I have said to them. I cannot find time for a debate on those matters next week. It is for the management and trade unions in the industries concerned to resolve those matters.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Did not my right hon. Friend forget one important item when he announced the business for next week? I refer to a debate on the Delors report and the Government's responses to the last week's discussions in Madrid.

Mr. Wakeham: No, I did not forget. My hon. Friend would have quickly reminded me if I had done so, as he politely tried to do just now. I recognise the desire for such a debate. I recognise also, as does my hon. Friend, that some European legislation is inadequately debated in this House. I hope very much to put proposals to improve matters to the Procedure Committee in the very near future.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. In view of the pressure of time, I shall allow questions to continue for a further five minutes —[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]

Mr. Douglas Hoyle (Warrington, North): In view of the business that has been announced for next week, I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 934, concerning the opting-out of Warrington district general hospital from the Health Service, signed by 71 hon. Members.

That this House supports the Medical Staff Committee of Warrington District General Hospital and the Warrington Trades Council in their opposition to the opting out of Warrington District General Hospital; and calls upon them to continue to oppose the pressure being put on them by regional and local administrators to opt out and agrees that if this hospital opts out it will be impossible to plan a health service to meet the ever expanding demands of an area which includes a new town.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the great concern in Warrington about that? Will he ask his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health to make a statement to the House next week and tell us who is to be consulted about that development, and whether there will be a ballot involving the people of Warrington and the hospital's general and medical staff, who oppose the change, or whether it be left to some anonymous administrator to decide the matter?

Mr. Wakeham: No, no—the hon. Gentleman is making much of the situation, and perhaps I should try to calm him down. One hundred and seventy-eight units throughout the country have expressed an interest, on a no-commitment basis, in the self-governing proposals. All those having an interest will be given an opportunity to express their views on individual proposals before any formal application is made. District health authorities will continue to have responsibility for the overall planning of health care in meeting the needs of their local populations. There will be plenty of time to discuss those matters, so there in no need for a debate on them next week.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): May we have a statement early next week on the implications for Britain of the astonishing and worrying action of the European Court in instructing the British Government not to honour their extradition agreement with the United States and to retain in this country a person accused of two dreadful murders? We would like a statement on how a non-elected court in Strasbourg can instruct this country not to send a person for trial in a friendly, democratic country.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that my hon. Friend takes a keen interest in such matters. I shall certainly refer his point to the colleague most directly responsible for dealing with them, and I will write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Could some indication be given next week of when the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten), the Minister for Overseas Development, will be able to report on his visit to Brazil and on his very important negotiations concerning the rain forests there? To set a good example, will the Lord President at least contact Downing street to see whether Mrs. Carla Powell or some other designer could be persuaded to buy oak rather than mahogany, as a symbol of our intent regarding rain forests?

Mr. Wakeham: I understand that the rain forest from which the mahogany to which the hon. Gentleman refers came has since been replanted. I shall certainly discuss with my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development the most appropriate way for him to inform the House of his very successful visit to Brazil.

Mr Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): As my right hon. Friend clearly has considerable influence over the Opposition Front Bench, will he explain why he has failed to persuade it to devote next week's Supply day to a debate on the rail dispute—particularly as the Leader of the

[Mr Andrew MacKay]

Opposition was so exercised about it during Prime Minister's Question Time today? Could it possibly be that the Opposition do not wish to be given a choice between not condemning the strike and falling out with their paymasters in the unions?

Mr. Wakeham: It is a bit mischievous of my hon. Friend to think that that might be the reason. The explanation may be that I have not quite so much influence over the Opposition Front Bench as my hon. Friend thinks.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Is the Leader of the House prepared to arrange an early debate on the conduct of local government, which would allow discussion of the latest antics of the Conservative-controlled Bradford city council? Is he aware that the council proposes next Tuesday to push through a social services committee and through the full council its plan to sell 12 old people's homes—with the old people—and that a management consultant has recommended that staff should be paid rates as low as £2 an hour?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that this matter lies at the heart of legal challenges to the mayor's casting vote, and that an application is pending for leave to appeal to the House of Lords? Is it not disgraceful that the proposal should go ahead in the face of fierce local opposition, and despite the undemocratic way in which it has been presented? May we have a debate so that the matter can be exposed?

Mr. Wakeham: I have noticed over recent months that the hon. Gentleman is, shall we say, a little partial over matters concerning Bradford City council, so I usually come prepared with any information that I can find with which to put matters right when he makes his wild accusations.

It is, of course, for the council to decide how best to cater for the elderly. In the council's opinion, its proposals will lead to improved conditions for old people in the homes which would become privately owned, thus reducing the cost to the ratepayers of Bradford. On the face of it, that seems a very sensible policy.

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the statement by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take points of order after the statements.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take the points of order after the statements.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No. Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take the points of order after the statements. I ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is a disgrace.

North East Shipbuilders Ltd.

4.2 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Antony Newton): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the disposal of North East Shipbuilders Ltd., whose closure I announced last December, in combination with proposals for an enterprise zone and other measures to promote alternative employment in Sunderland.

As I told the House in a written answer on 7 June, in the intervening period there emerged a number of expressions of interest in bidding for some or all of the three yards for various purposes, including ship repair, shipbuilding and general engineering. We had therefore decided to ask British Shipbuilders to evaluate the proposals and to offer advice that would then be taken into account along with wider considerations. Pending a decision, elements of the remedial package not already implemented, including designation of the enterprise zone, were to be held in abeyance. In the light of British Shipbuilders' advice, we have now reviewed the position as a whole. Of the many factors involved, there are three in particular to which I should refer.

First, of course, I must refer to the bids themselves, of which there are four. Two are from shipbuilding interests. While they vary in respect of the anticipated use of the yards, especially in the short term, both envisage initial employment of about 200, rising to around 1,000 at some later date. Of the non-shipbuilding bids, one is concerned only with the Pallion yard; it envisages employing about 250 people initially—rising to 600 at a later date—on work connected with desalination projects, floating harbours and offshore oil equipment. The other envisages employment of 400 initially, rising to some 1,650 in three years, to manufacture a waste disposal system which has been demonstrated, but not yet exploited, in Canada.

The advice I have received from British Shipbuilders is balanced. In the case of what it regards as the better of the two shipbuilding bids, it notes the continued risk to secure long-term employment from the market and from levels of productivity achievable in the yard. Of what it regards as the better of the two non-shipbuilding bids, it says that it could represent the basis for a new and substantial manufacturing activity, but a number of important aspects require further elucidation before clear advice can be given on the prospects of secure employment.

The second factor, which I give particular weight, is the importance attached in Sunderland to the enterprise zone. When I visited the town again at the end of last month, following my statement of 7 June, I was given confirmation of the exceptionally high level of interest which the proposed zone had attracted, including that of many potential inward industrial investors. As a result, it was confidently expected to produce well over 3,000 jobs over the next five years, with perhaps another 1,000 to come from other elements in the remedial package. Everyone to whom I spoke emphasised their wish to press ahead with realising this opportunity and the need to remove any doubt or delay.

Thirdly, we have had to take account of the position under the sixth directive on state-aid to shipbuilding—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"]—under which a variety of measures connected with British Shipbuilders, including the sale of certain assets, the anticipated closure of NESL

and some aspects of the remedial package for Sunderland were notified to, and accepted by, the Commission at the turn of last year.

We have always made it clear in the House, and to the parties interested in purchasing the yards for shipbuilding, that the Commission would necessarily be interested in any material change in these arrangements, inevitably leading to uncertainty about the outcome. This uncertainty could only finally be resolved by a formal renotification, leading to a decision by the Commission as a whole. However, the soundings we have taken with the Commission suggest that they would be likely to insist on a procedure lasting some four to six months. The probable outcome would be for any prospective purchaser of NESL to have to shoulder a significant additional burden arising from past British Shipbuilders losses.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Why? Under what law?

Mr. Newton: Moreover, it has been made clear that the Sunderland enterprise zone, which also required Commission consent, could be called into question.

Having carefully weighed all these considerations, our view is that the essential choice is clear: either the shipbuilding bids, which offer at best an uncertain prospect of fewer jobs than before in an industry which has always been subject to considerable insecurity or the vigorous and whole-hearted pursuit of the enterprise zone as planned, including the Southwick yard.

We have concluded that the latter course is the best in the long-term interests of Sunderland. Accordingly, I am asking British Shipbuilders, in consultation with the Tyne and Wear development corporation, to undertake further work with the existing bidders on the use of the assets for purposes other than shipbuilding with a view to making final recommendations about the future of the assets in due course. The establishment of the enterprise zone, and all other elements in the package of measures to promote enterprise and new jobs in Sunderland, will be pressed ahead with all possible vigour.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): Is this not a shameful statement, about which the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster ought to feel duly ashamed? Does it not amount to the pronouncement of the death sentence on a major British industry? Has he not made it clear that the sentence has already been carried out—execution by ministerial incompetence? The death of British shipbuilding lies at his door, and should be on his conscience.

How is it, after commercially viable bids, acceptable to the vendors, for Europe's most advanced shipyards in Europe's leading maritime nation, by two European shipbuilders who need no subsidy, who want to build ships to take advantage of the upturn in world shipping, who will provide employment for hundreds and eventually, perhaps thousands of shipyard workers in an area of high unemployment, and who want to rebuild a strategic British industry, that the Chancellor can come to the House and say that those bids cannot proceed, and that the last remaining British merchant shipbuilding capacity must be extinguished? Is this not a nightmare in which reason and commercial logic have been stood on their heads?

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I agree.

Mr. Gould: Does it not fly in the face of his earlier assurances that bids that required no subsidy would meet no difficulties?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, in a letter dated 8 February which he wrote to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay), he said:

"Should any one wish to purchase some or all of the Sunderland facilities for shipbuilding without any form of assistance, that would entail only the negotiation with British Shipbuilders of acceptable terms for acquiring the facilities in question."?

Why do the British Government no longer have the power to allow those bids to proceed? Is it not a totally irrational response to the undoubted efforts of a world upturn in shipping, of which the commercially viable bids for the yards are further convincing evidence? Is not his representation of British Shipbuilders' attitude to the bids and his implication of a link between the decision he announced and the aid package to Sunderland simply an attempt to mask the fact that he totally failed to comprehend the situation and discovered only two days ago—too late, it seems—that the European Commission, having sanctioned his closure of the yards, was determined that they should not be reopened?

When the right hon. Gentleman has had written details of at least one offer since early April, why did it take him so long to discover what the Commission's attitude would be? Why did he wait until the end of June before raising these matters with the Commission? Even now, will he tell the Commission that he and his Government are not prepared to sit back and allow Britain, of all countries, to be reduced to a situation where it no longer has any major merchant shipbuilding capacity, when other European countries such as Italy and Spain retain such a capacity? Will he give an assurance that he will not break up the assets until the negotiations to which he refers have been concluded?

Finally, does the right hon. Gentleman accept that British merchant shipbuilding has been denied, by his statement, the life-saving help that is on offer and has accordingly been left to die of the wounds which he has needlessly inflicted?

Mr. Newton: May I make two factual points in response to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould)? There remains quite significant merchant shipbuilding capacity in Britain.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Where?

Mr. Newton: Well, including Harland and Wolff in Northern Ireland and a number of yards on the British mainland, including Swan Hunter, often in yards which carry out a great deal of military shipbuilding. The notion that there is some death sentence, as the hon. Member for Dagenham put it, on merchant shipbuilding in Britain, is extremely far-fetched. In conjunction with almost all European countries, Britain has suffered a large decline in merchant shipbuilding capacity over a decade or 20 years, leading to difficulties in recent years.

Let me turn to some of the other points that the hon. Gentleman raised about our dealings with the Commission. At every stage, we have sought to give the House, bidders and hon. Members the best possible assessment that we could of the position in relation to the directive as events have moved on. I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) will wish to advert to that point.

[Mr. Newton]

The letter that I wrote on 8 February, as the hon. Member for Dagenham said, refers to subsidised shipbuilding, and is quite clear about what the difficulties would be in respect of subsidised shipbuilding. The point at issue now is precisely how the question of subsidy will be interpreted by the Commission, and its likely response as proposals have been refined and hardened over the past few months.

Let me make one last point in response to the hon. Member for Dagenham. Immediately after the first bid was received on 6 April, the bid in which the hon. Member for Sunderland, North is particularly interested, an approach was made by officials to the Commission for indications of what the position would be.

On 11 April, it was immediately made clear to the bidders that any question of a bid involving intervention fund continuing subsidy would be likely to cause great difficulty, to put it mildly, and even without that there could be considerable difficulties. Within a week or so, the bidders came back with a bid which demonstrated that they would seek to manage without intervention fund, but in which many other details were lacking, and which took the Government some time to probe to make some assessment of whether it was a bid that we could sensibly put forward as a concrete proposal. At the same time, or a little later, in May, we received another shipbuilding bid, which also needed careful assessment.

Around the turn of May and in early June, we received definite bids for non-shipbuilding purposes. It seemed to me right, and it still seems to me right, to have undertaken a proper evaluation of all those bids alongside each other, rather than take an endlessly moving series of hypothetical questions to the Commission.

The first requirement was that the British Government should decide what was the sensible way forward. I emphasise that what we have done is weigh what we regard as the very uncertain prospects of creating sufficient secure employment with the shipbuilding bids against the advantages of pressing ahead full steam with the enterprise zone, with the possibility of a non-shipbuilding bid that may well in the end—I accept that further work on it is needed—prove to be a more attractive prospect for the use of the yards in providing secure employment in Sunderland.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Is it not the simple truth, for all that the Minister is trying to get around it in the most disingenuous manner, that he made it clear, not only in the letter to me but in other letters and statements, that subsidy meant intervention fund money and that all these difficulties about which we are now being told would follow if bidders asked for intervention fund money? They were told not to ask for it. They forwent intervention fund money. At a late stage, months later, the Minister suddenly discovered when he went to speak to the Commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, that all these difficulties existed, which the Commissioner claimed he should have known about from the start, from the time that he made the statements in the House last December.

Because of this complete incompetence, muddle and surrender to Brussels, without even making a formal notification of these proposals, and at a time when the market for ships is rising steeply, as the Minister knows, and when free enterprise operators—whom one would think the Government would welcome and bless—want to order ships immediately, have other orders to place and require no subsidy or state assistance, those people are having the door slammed in their faces. The people of Sunderland, especially the shipyard workers who have been made redundant and their families, have been treated in the most disgraceful way. I hope that the Minister at least feels, in his heart of hearts, that this is the most shameful day of his political life.

Mr. Newton: I do not, of course, accept much of what the hon. Gentleman has said——

Mr. Clay: Well, the Minister should.

Mr. Newton: Of course, however, I understand the strength of the hon. Gentleman's feelings. I hope that he will at least accept that I have never sought to be, nor, in my view, have I been, disingenuous in the points that I have made to the House. I ask the hon. Gentleman to accept, in what is undoubtedly a difficult balance of judgment, taking account of a variety of factors, that we have sought to come to the conclusion that offers those self-same people of Sunderland, about whom I share the hon. Gentleman's concern, the best prospect for new industries, expanding industries and jobs that will last in the long term.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Does my right hon. Friend recall that some years ago a similar decision had to be taken by the Government with regard to the Brigg and Scunthorpe constituency where there was a steel problem? Was not the greatest decision for the benefit of my constituents in both Brigg and Scunthorpe then and Brigg and Cleethorpes now, the decision to ensure that an enterprise zone would be created? I advise my right hon. Friend to invite Labour Members to go to Scunthorpe, Glanford and Brigg to see the massive increase in investment, job diversification and employment that has resulted from the decision to create an enterprise zone in my constituency.

Mr. Newton: It certainly is the case that the experience of enterprise zones in transforming the prospects of areas that have lived with industries experiencing great structural decline has been very striking and encouraging indeed. One of the things that has contributed to the decision that I have announced today in respect of Sunderland, is that, by all accounts, the interest shown in the enterprise zone in Sunderland has been exceptional, even by the standards of earlier enterprise zones.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Does the Minister accept that many people in Sunderland will feel betrayed by today's decision? For months his Department has perpetrated a cruel hoax not only on the people of Sunderland but on the enterprises that were bidding for the yards. The Department told us that unsubsidised ship offers would be seriously considered. Not one but two have emerged. We now learn that, because of a decision that was taken, probably at the end of December, they cannot now be considered.

People in Sunderland simply will not understand what is happening. The Minister seems only recently to have become aware of an understanding that his own Department reached some months ago. Why was the

fiasco allowed to continue for so long if people in the Minister's Department knew that shipbuilding would never be allowed to resurface?

Will the Minister place in the Library of the House of Commons all communications with Brussels relating to this matter so that hon. Members can see it for themselves? Is it possible that the Minister was the only person in his Department who was not aware of the understanding that was reached as long ago as last December? We in Sunderland worked out a long time ago that such an understanding had obviously been reached. Will the Minister apologise to the people of Sunderland for the cruel hoax that has been perpetrated on them for so long?

Mr. Newton: There has been no question of a cruel hoax. The bids that have come forward have been evaluated and assessed in the context of what I have repeatedly emphasised at every stage since I took on these responsibilities a year ago—that the primary factor was what was likely to be best in the long-term interests of the people and the area of Sunderland. Having evaluated and assessed those bids against the alternatives, both the non-shipbuilding bids and the enterprise zone, we have come to the conclusion that I have outlined this afternoon. I feel no need to make an apology for that. I naturally regret, as I regretted last December, that at that stage it had not proved possible to find a way forward. What I do not regret is having to put to the House this afternoon a decision that I believe is in the best interests of the jobs and the future of industry in Sunderland.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I am sure that my right hon. Friend will allow me to comment that, at best, this is a fairly lamentable episode—lamentable not wholly for the unjustified accusations that were flung at my right hon. Friend but for the way in which the shipbuilding directive, the intervention fund and the role of subsidy are now being interpreted. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will understand that my view is that we cannot have a regime that allows an industry to contract and yet is somehow incapable of expansion when the need for expansion occurs. Would it not be a reasonable outcome of this episode for my right hon. Friend to seek to renegotiate, or perhaps introduce another element into, the directive to allow a more orderly course for possible expansion should there be a need, as there is in many cyclical industries, which the private sector has detected, to fulfil a genuine demand?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that it necessarily follows from what I have said that the current directive, which will last until the end of 1990, is incapable of responding to a change in circumstances. We are considering the conditions in which such a change might take place against the background of what had been agreed earlier. There might be two views on the detail of that argument, but that is a slightly different point. I can certainly undertake to my hon. Friend—he asked in a reasonable way—that we shall take account of all experience of operation of the current sixth directive when negotiating some successor directive, as will no doubt occur at some time in the next 18 months.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Does the Minister accept that the patient and dogged people of the north will share a sense of dismay at his statement, which means that industries that could have survived and, indeed, prospered are not to be allowed to do so? Does he also accept that what rubs salt in the wound is his reference to Swan Hunter when it, as part of another deal, was also prevented from ever having access to the intervention fund and had to struggle in the merchant shipbuilding market on its own?

Will the Minister tell the House with direct candour which will stick? Will a deal based on shipbuilding and ship conversion be acceptable, or is that, too, part of a cover-up, which leads us from the bluster of Bruges to the sale of our shipyards?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman may have made a slip of the tongue when referring to shipbuilding and ship conversion. He may have meant ship repairing and ship conversion.

I cannot be optimistic at this stage about that possibility without an opportunity to consider in more detail its possible relationship with the wider situation in the directive that I described. For example, were there to be a proposal for ship repairing at North Sands, which is one of the possibilities that I understand has been floated, I would certainly be prepared to consider it, provided that I can be satisfied that it will not risk the adverse consequences to which I referred in my statement or conflict with the vigorous pursuit of the enterprise zone and the creation of alternative employment in Sunderland.

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): My right hon. Friend is known to have taken a great personal interest in trying to deal with the serious problems caused by the collapse of the yard in Sunderland. He must be aware of the strength of feeling about what has happened—that the almost miraculous prospect of the shipbuilding yard reopening has not come about.

Is the Minister aware that the relationship with Brussels is seen as a key factor in this? Does he agree that the long-term future of Sunderland lies with the enterprise zone and transformation to industries with a secure future? Are there not two odd facts about the bids that have been received from shipbuilders? Why were they not put forward while the yard was still open? Why did they wait until the yard closed, knowing that, in doing so, they would no longer get intervention fund money? Does that not put doubt into people's minds about whether there would have been a long-term significant future if the bids had gone ahead earlier?

Mr. Newton: I certainly accept what my hon. Friend said about how much better it would have been had either of the bids been put forward at a different time, when they could have been considered in a different context. As to how secure they would be, I said in my statement and probably also in some of my answers to supplementary questions that considerable doubt remains about the long-term security of the jobs that would be created if either of these bids were to proceed. That is one of the things that we have borne in mind when judging what my hon. Friend rightly says is the alternative, which is the pursuit of the creation of jobs in new and different industries, particularly through the enterprise zone, but also in other ways.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): The Minister referred to the importance that the people of Sunderland attach to the enterprise zone. He did not refer to, but is he

[Ms. Joyce Quin]

aware of the great importance that is attached in the town of Sunderland to keeping the shipyards open? That is the real feeling of the people of Sunderland.

Furthermore, instead of simply giving way to the European Commission, does the Minister consider that, in view of the reduction in capacity in British shipbuilding, and the fact that there are European bidders for the Sunderland yards, he should have made a strong case out to the Commission and been prepared to fight, if necessary, to keep the yards open?

Mr. Newton: There is no question of having given way to the Commission. We have to take account of a directive which, as part of the Community's policy to secure a level playing field on state aid to industry generally, is to be seen in the interests of this country.

As I said in my statement, I had to judge whether arguing these matters through was in the interests of what was, at best, an uncertain prospect for jobs in an industry which has been notoriously subject to cyclical swings, and over which there was therefore some doubt about the long-term security of jobs, to decide whether that was the right thing to do.

On balance, taking all the considerations together, I came to the conclusion that it was not, and that it was right to proceed full speed ahead with the alternatives including, most notably, the enterprise zone.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): As someone who was brought up in Sunderland, I appreciate that there will be strong feelings there today about the Government's decision, but as someone who represents a Teesside constituency, I must advise the House that a few years ago we were in the same position, but that today Teesside is booming and going ahead. Only today I received a press release from the international chemical company MTM, stating that it is investigating and evaluating a £50 million investment in Teesside, bringing with it 1,000 jobs. That is the way forward for the ex-shipbuilding areas.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has made an important point about experience in another part of the north-east which I have also visited frequently. While, for obvious reasons, it is not possible for me at present to refer to some of the specific interests that have emerged in relation to the enterprise zone in Sunderland, I am confident that the experience that my hon. Friend reports from Teesside will be repeated in Sunderland and that that will be profoundly to the long-term benefit of the people of that area.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) invited the Minister to place the correspondence between himself and the EEC on intervention funding in the Library so that we could all have a look at it. Is his reluctance to do so because that correspondence would reveal a shoddy deal to sell out for all time any prospect of intervention funding for shipbuilding in the northern region so that he could gain the consent of the EEC bureaucracy for the quite different and far more advantageous arrangements that the Government have put in hand in Northern Ireland and for Harland and Wolff?

Mr. Newton: No, as far as we are aware, no link is being made between the Commission's consideration of the proposals on Harland and Wolff and those agreed at the turn of last year for British Shipbuilders. Harland and Wolff is not part of British Shipbuilders, it is a separate entity. Therefore, I do not think that what the hon. Gentleman has suggested will stand up.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to have to say again that we have great pressure on time today. I appreciate hon. Members' interest and hope that I have called all those who have a direct interest. I shall allow two more questions from each side, and I am sorry that that will not include every hon. Member who wishes to ask a question.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): While only time will tell whether the Sunderland people will do better out of making ships, hula-hoops, beefburgers or anything else, does the Minister acknowledge that there is a massive constitutional problem because a clear statement on which shipbuilders and others acted stated that, without intervention aid, the matter could be considered only by British Shipbuilders, but we now find that the Commission has redefined "aid" and insisted that any proposal must involve historic losses? Would it not be infinitely better for a Conservative Government in a free-market economy to leave such decision to the market and not to non-elected bureaucrats in Brussels? What powers were they using when they said that historic losses should be taken into account?

Mr. Newton: First, if my hon. Friend's initial point refers to the same letter that has been adverted to at various times during the past half hour, I remind him that it referred to subsidy in general rather than to intervention fund in particular. I have already referred to that on several occasions.

Secondly, I do not see anything unconstitutional in this country—in this case it happens to be within the framework of the Community, but it could equally well be within some international framework—signing an agreed set of rules that are designed to create a level playing field about state aid, for shipbuilding in this case, but which apply to state aids for other purposes as well——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): They do not want state aids.

Mr. Newton: —including the motor car industry. The Commission is operating within the agreed terms of the sixth directive, to which this country was party.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the Minister stop waffling to the House? If he is saying that he did not know last December, does he recall that he appeared before the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on matters relating to North East Shipbuilders only in late June? Why did he not tell the Committee then that non-subsidised shipbuilding would not be allowed and that if it was allowed, the EEC would then reconsider all the subsidies paid to British shipbuilding? Why does he take such a weak, craven and pusillanimous attitude to the EEC? Will he go back to Brussels and speak for Britain and for British shipbuilding?

Mr. Newton: At every stage, I have given those who have asked me about these matters my best assessment on the information available to me at the time.

With regard to the second half of the hon. Gentleman's question, I can tell him that I have made it absolutely clear that the Government have made a judgment on the basis of a very wide range of factors. At the end of the day, the key issue for us—I would hope, too, for the House—is how we can best promote the largest number of long-term secure jobs in Sunderland. I believe that what I have announced today will achieve that.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is considerable sympathy with and admiration for his difficult decisions? Can the people of Sunderland not take courage from what has happened to us in Wales, where structural unemployment has led to a considerable decline in the coal and steel industries, but where industry has diversified and many new jobs have been created? Can my right hon. Friend not draw comfort from the success of the Milford Haven enterprise zone in my constituency? In the town of Pembroke Dock, where there was very high unemployment in the past two and a half years we have seen 50 per cent. reduction in unemployment as a direct consequence of having an enterprise zone in the area.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend also for his example of the success of measures similar to those that we intend to press ahead in Sunderland. I have no doubt that it was knowledge of those experiences that led to the experience that I recounted, of being pressed very hard in Sunderland to ensure that nothing was done to impede the implementation and success of that enterprise zone.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Will the Minister be a little more forthcoming about his reference to the Commission? It became clear from his statement that the Sunderland enterprise zone, which required Commission consent, could be called into question. Is he saying that in all the to-ing and fro-ing with the Commission, it has said that, if the Department of Trade and Industry pursued the bids, it would pull the plug on the enterprise zone?

Mr. Newton: To be precise, when I saw Commissioner Brittan in Brussels, as part of our process of evaluating the bids and deciding what to do, it was made clear that the Commission could not rule out reopening the question of the enterprise zone, which it said it saw as related to the Sunderland package.

Honda (Investment)

4.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Robert Atkins): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement on a major Japanese inward investment project in the motor sector by Honda. Since shortly after its return to full private ownership last year, Rover has been discussing with Honda how best to strengthen each other's position in Europe. One element in those discussions has been Honda's site at Swindon, which has already been developed for engine manufacture. I am sure that the whole House will join me in welcoming today's announcement that Honda is to extend that facility to full manufacture of cars for the European market. The new plant will add some 1,300 jobs to Honda's existing work force at Swindon, as well as providing additional opportunities for Rover Group's own Swindon facility, from which it will source pressings. The project will involve additional investment of around £300 million, and no financial assistance has been requested.

The plant is scheduled to commence manufacture at the end of 1991, with a limited volume of Honda cars. That will be in direct substitution for imports from Japan. One year later, a full range of production operations will start, with output rising rapidly to 100,000 cars per annum in 1994; that will include cars built for Rover. Rover will continue to build cars for Honda at Longbridge. Honda has indicated its wish to achieve the maximum commercially feasible level of local content throughout the project and it is its firm intention to reach an 80 per cent. level within 18 months of the start of full commercial operations.

The companies have now decided to cement their partnership through significant minority cross-shareholdings between Honda's United Kingdom manufacturing company and Rover Group. They believe that that will have important commercial benefits for both companies. We see it as a vote of confidence by Honda in the United Kingdom and in the Rover Group, and a tribute to the efforts of Rover's management and work force in restructuring that company to meet the exacting standards of today's market place.

We are confident that today's announcement amounts to a further step in the renaissance of the United Kingdom motor industry, ensuring that it will play a significant role in the European market of the 1990s. I commend it to the House.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): Does the Minister agree that we would not have has this modest statement but for the bitter pill of the preceding one? The Department of Trade and Industry has contributed absolutely nothing to the deal.

Will he confirm that the cross-shareholding between Rover and Honda UK is 20 per cent? Why has the Minister not told the House that that is what it is? How could that be fair to Rover? What valuation would that place on Rover?

Is the Minister aware that we welcome Japanese inward investment so long as it is complementary to our indigenous manufacturing capacity and not destructive of it? In that regard, what are the implications of the agreement for Rover Group's employment at Longbridge

[Mr. John Garrett]

and at Cowley and, in particular, for the collaborative ventures that the two companies have already entered into on the R8, R9 and Rover 8000 model? Will those ventures still go ahead, or will they be overtaken by today's announcement? What does the Minister expect the impact to be on the output and employment prospects of other car manufacturers in Britain?

When the Minister speaks of 80 per cent. local content, I assume that he means European Economic Community content. Could he tell us what the British percentage content will be? Will it include such key components as transmission and electronics? Will research, development and design be carried out at Swindon or back at the headquarters in Japan?

What sign is there that France, Italy and Spain will be willing to remove their obstacles to Japanese car imports from Britain without further undertakings? What is his response to their argument that the British motor manufacture industry is becoming a Japanese offshore island?

In view of the so-called renaissance of the British motor industry to which the Minister referred, when does he expect us to have a trade surplus in motor vehicles? For how much longer will there be a British-owned motor manufacturing industry?

Mr. Atkins: It really is extraordinary that, when I come to the House and make a statement that is wonderful good news for the motor industry and for Swindon in particular, all that the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) can do is make snide remarks about colonisation —[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the questions."] I will come to the questions that the hon. Gentleman posed. It is right and proper, however, that my hon. Friends and I should record our disgust at the way in which this particular announcement of good news has been approached by the Opposition.

I remind the House, in case the Opposition are unaware of it, that this announcement represents the third major inward investment coup in the motor sector of the United Kingdom. It follows on from Nissan and Toyota—now we have Honda. That means that about £1·8 billion of investment in the United Kingdom has created about 8,250 jobs directly, and at least as many again in the supply industry. All that the hon. Member for Norwich, South can do is complain about that. He calls that "modest". I do not call it modest; I call it a substantial contribution to our economy and deservedly so.

The hon. Gentleman asked a number of questions, first about the 80 per cent. content. The 80 per cent. content will be British content obviously, as that is what we committed ourselves to in the past. We anticipate that that will be the case again. *[Interruption.]* Built within the EEC. That 80 per cent. is deemed to be British, built within the EEC. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that that was the case with Nissan—80 per cent. was made in Britain within the EEC. *[Interruption.]* It is quite straightforward. There is no question or argument about it.

The hon. Gentleman asked about cross-shareholding. The details of the agreement are not yet available, as they are commercially confidential, but we anticipate that the hon. Gentleman's figure will probably be about right. It will be a cross-shareholding—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman posed a question and I am seeking to answer it. He suggested that there was a cross-shareholding of 20 per cent. We do not know the final details yet, but that sort of figure will probably be the end result. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that in the spirit that it is rendered. The terms of the agreement will obviously be confidential until such time as the companies concerned announce them. That is right and proper, since Rover Group is now in the private sector.

The hon. Gentleman asked about jobs at Longbridge. We understand from Rover Group that, as a result of the agreement, there is unlikely to be any effect upon jobs at Longbridge. The hon. Gentleman also asked about Cowley. He will be aware that, within the corporate plan of Rover Group, it has said that Cowley is one of those areas that is being looked at. Nothing changes as a result of the agreement that is being negotiated between Honda and Rover Group.

I believe that I have covered the questions asked by the hon. Gentleman. I hope that he will appreciate that my hon. Friends will take an entirely different view from his of this excellent news.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Will my hon. Friend agree that it was virtually inconceivable before 1979 that Great Britain would have been chosen by what is probably the world's leading motor manufacturing company as the site for its investment in the EEC? I might add that it also would have been inconceivable before we joined the EEC. Is my hon. Friend not as shocked as I am that the sole reaction from Opposition Members is to try to show that, in some way, it is discreditable that a foreign company should be investing large sums in British industry and bringing jobs to Britain? I find that deplorable. Does my hon. Friend share that feeling?

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend, speaking with the authority of his former position within the Department of Trade and Industry, knows exactly how important this deal is in relation to the past, present and future of the motor industry. I suspect, as he has pointed out, that many people within the country, particularly in the area of Swindon where the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) is so beneficially affected, will take note of the churlish attitude of the Opposition in the way in which they have responded to the excellent news.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): The Minister called this good news, but is it good news for Cowley? Is it not disgraceful that his statement and the company handout at the Cowley plant this afternoon made no reference to Cowley? Does he not understand that Cowley workers will ask the same question as I do—what implications does the agreement hold for Cowley? What is its future in this? Why put the investment and plant 25 miles down the road at Swindon when there is a perfectly good plant at Cowley with an excellent record of productivity, quality and industrial relations?

Does the company not owe it to the workers at Cowley and the Government to spell out what the agreement means to those workers? Will the 100,000 vehicles be in addition to Rover production, in which case surely they will be competing with them, or is the reality that those vehicles will displace production from other centres, most notably Cowley? Unless I hear some contradictory statement from the Minister, the conclusion at Cowley will be that his doom-laden words spell its death sentence.

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman makes comments about Cowley as he is entitled to do as it falls within his constituency, but he will recognise that this agreement has been carried out between two independent companies about what they see is best for their future. It is something for them to decide. We have been party to the agreement of intent between Honda and the Rover Group. That is why we are involved. There is no link between what is proposed here and the future of Cowley south.

The hon. Gentleman is being mischievous. I do not think that he is serving his constituents' interests by taking the attitude that he does, but perhaps it is because his attitude towards cars is summed up by his question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport earlier this week, when he suggested that the relentless increase in car use was something to be deplored. I find that an astonishing remark to come from that hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Andrew Smith: What I said, Mr. Speaker, was that——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): Is my hon. Friend aware that Honda is already a valued member of the industrial community of Swindon and that today's news will be warmly welcomed in the town? Will he pay tribute to the current work force of Honda in Swindon and the work force of the Rover Group plant at Stratton in Swindon? It is clearly as a result of their efforts that the company has made the decision which my hon. Friend has announced this afternoon.

Will my hon. Friend make representations to his other hon. Friends in the Departments of Transport, Employment and Environment so that today's good news is not spoiled by difficulties of transport infrastructure—because clearly there will be major movements of goods in and out of the plant in the future—the provision of visas for foreign nationals whose jobs will bring them to Honda in the future and of the need to train the work force in a town with an unemployment rate of less than 3·5 per cent.? Will he speak to his hon. Friends at the Department of Environment, because we do not need planning holdups when we try to put this good news into practice? Can my hon. Friend confirm that 80 per cent. local content must, under the rules of the European Commission, be European local content——

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): He said British.

Mr. Coombs: —and will he make sure that as much as possible of that local sourcing will be United Kingdom-based?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend, as always, speaks strongly for his constituents' interests, and he is right to draw attention to the fact that it is largely because of the work, commitment and enthusiasm of his constituents and those working within the Swindon operation that Honda has decided to expand in this area. I shall certainly pursue, as I know he will, the points he made about my hon. Friends in other Departments, who have interests in relation to Swindon's infrastructure.

As for local content, I shall clarify the position so that the House knows exactly what it is. I shall state it as categorically as I can. The 80 per cent. local content required by our agreement is within the EEC, but will be British-based. We shall encourage British component companies and Honda to utilise——

Mr. Gould: That is not what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. Atkins: That is exactly what I said.

Mr. Gould: No, it is not.

Mr. Atkins: In which case, I apologise if there has been a misunderstanding. If it was on my part, as I made the comment, I shall withdraw it unreservedly. It is crucial to make clear that it is 80 per cent. EEC content and we shall endeavour to ensure that that 80 per cent. will be British. In view of what the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) said about the colonisation of the motor industry by Japan, it is worth putting on the record the fact that it is Honda's intention, as it has been that of many other companies investing in the motor industry in this country, that that content shall be as British as possible.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Opposition always welcome jobs in manufacturing, in view of the 2 million jobs which have gone since 1979 under the present Tory Government. Will there be a continuing and developing design and development input from the United Kingdom into this plant, or has the hon. Gentleman merely announced a screwdriver assembly job? I am pleased that the Minister has clarified the confusion and stated that the local content means EEC-wide, not United Kingdom-based.

Since the hon. Gentleman intends to help United Kingdom manufacturers, how will he help a firm such as Hepworth and Grandage, the biggest piston manufacturer in the United Kingdom, to ensure that it has an opportunity to supply pistons to this new assembly plant and maintain and improve its excellent production capacity? Are the Japanese able to invest heavily in design and development and so be extremely successful in industrial manufacturing because they put their investment into goods and services which people want, instead of investing, as this country does, in nuclear weapons and defence expenditure?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman, as usual, has covered a wide variety of questions in his remarks. Research and development is a matter for the companies to decide. They have indicated that they will manufacture cars in Britain which will be exported abroad or used within the domestic market. We have no indications, and would not expect any, to suggest that the company concerned, along with the other two major manufacturers from Japan which invest in this country—Toyota and Nissan—will do the same. The decisions must be made by the companies, which we anticipate will be as successful now as in the past.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Does my hon. Friend agree that this project should be warmly welcomed for the contribution it will make to our balance of payments deficit, running at £6 billion per annum; that, with this investment, we can once again look forward to building 2 million cars a year in this country; and that the cross-shareholdings represent an outside investment in the Rover Group which is a tribute to what that company has achieved and an assurance that Rover will continue to make cars for Honda? What better endorsement could we wish for?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend, with his considerable authority as chairman of the all-party committee, sums up the matter succinctly. I can do no better than add my support to that.

Mr. John Hughes (Coventry, North-East): How can the Minister fail to understand the mistrust of the House when it is aware that deals have been done—in fact, cooked—to get over the cash flow problems of British Aerospace? Will this deal allow Honda to exploit the research and design centre at Coventry? Will it pose a threat to jobs at Coventry, as it has to other companies such as Royal Enfield, which lost 1,200 jobs from a similar deal?

Mr. Atkins: I think that the hon. Gentleman is missing the point. This is an investment for the motor industry; as he has heard from my statement, the matter is one between Honda and the Rover Group, and does not involve anyone else other than, to a limited extent, British Aerospace, which owns Rover Group. As the hon. Gentleman should be aware, this matter relates specifically to the motor industry.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): Does not my hon. Friend agree that the greater threat to Cowley south stems, as he indicated, from a quote in column 673 of last Monday's *Hansard*, in which the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) said:

"Does he accept that the way to tackle the"—[*Official Report*, 10 July 1989; Vol. 156, c. 673]——

Mr. Andrew Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This does not relate to the statement.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that we can stick to the subject of the statement, not go on to other issues.

Mr. Hayward: Is there any threat to any other part of the Rover plant, including Oxford and Longbridge, as a result of my hon. Friend's statement?

Mr. Atkins: Largely, these matters are for those at the Rover Group and Honda. Broadly speaking, we do not anticipate that there will be any deleterious effects on those parts of the Rover Group, as presently constituted.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the Minister's phrase "local content" include transmission and electronics?

Mr. Atkins: "Local content" refers to any aspect of components which go into a motor vehicle.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Can my hon. Friend confirm that, between 1974 and 1979, the proportion of motor cars imported into the United Kingdom doubled, since when the proportion has remained static, and that, with the announcement of these three major investments by the Japanese, there is now every prospect of reducing that proportion? Is not today's announcement the best possible news for UK Ltd.?

Mr. Atkins: Yes, Sir.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the two motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the Black Country Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (British Railways Board) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Black Country Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (Central Electricity Generating Board) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—[*Mr. Alan Howarth.*]

Points of Order

4.58 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You were in the Chair today when a number of us were trying to catch your eye during questions to the Leader of the House. Is it not time that the Government recognised that if you, in your wisdom, feel that you must curtail our rights as Back Benchers to ask the Leader of the House about matters relating to next week's business the Government should curtail their practice of making statements on Thursday? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Our rights are being directly interfered with.

A number of my colleagues were called—I accept that you work these matters out scrupulously fairly—and a number of people wanted to raise issues today relating to next week's business, particularly as we are approaching the end of the Session. We were prevented from doing so because you felt the Government had to be given time for this statement. I understand that the next business is important, but all business which comes on to the Floor of the House of Commons is important. It is quite wrong that we should be prevented from raising issues. A number of my colleagues were here, and I know that they are all equally concerned.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Well, it does delay matters.

Mr. Lamond: This offence is compounded by the fact that the second statement concerned a matter with which the Government have told us they had nothing to do. Good news or not, one wonders whether it was necessary to make a statement of that length on a Thursday about a matter in which the Government are not concerned.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Further to that point of order——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps it would be easier if I dealt with this matter. I am the first to appreciate the importance of business questions because they enable hon. Members who have not been called during the week to put a question to the Leader of the House. However, I also have to judge business questions against business which will come before the House later. The whole House knows that today we have an important debate before us, to which a great many right hon. and hon. Members want to make a contribution. I am sorry that I had to curtail business questions, but I did manage to call the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) during the statement, and I also called the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) during business questions—so what is the validity of this point of order?

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful for the opportunity to raise a point of order—not because I was not called, but because several other hon. Members were not.

I suggest that you, Mr. Speaker, suggest to the Government when they approach you about statements that they should organise them on days other than Thursday. Of course, sometimes we want statements and the Government are rather parsimonious about making them, which makes us suspicious of their reasons for making two on a Thursday. As you know, every Thursday 50 or 60 hon. Members seek to catch you eye to raise matters of interest. I know that you realise that business questions are an important tradition and an opportunity to raise a matter on the Floor of the House, so I hope that you will bear that in mind when the Government apply to make a statement.

Mr. Madden: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In addition to what my hon. Friends have said, I suggest with the greatest respect that it is a dangerous innovation for you to limit business questions. I was grateful to be called, but if the Government believe that you will adopt this line, that will encourage them to table a number of statements which, in effect, will enable them to veto business questions. That would veto the rights of Back Benchers and the time available to them in a dangerous and unacceptable way.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it help? The hon. Member was also called, and he is also hoping to be called in the next debate.

Mr. Wells: I wanted to be helpful, Mr. Speaker. I thought that you would like me to observe that those who complain most are those whom you most frequently call.

Mr. Speaker: That is helpful.

I say to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) that it is certainly not an innovation to curtail business questions. It is probably true that I have allowed them to go on rather longer during my speakership than did some of my predecessors, for the very reasons that hon. Members will appreciate, but that cannot happen every time. I am sorry that I had to curtail them today.

China and Hong Kong

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Mr. Speaker: Before I call on the Foreign Secretary, I must tell the House again that 36 right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate in the debate. Sadly, because of the late start, they will not all be called. I intend to limit speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm to 10 minutes, and if those who are called before 7 will bear that limit in mind, many more of their colleagues will be able to participate.

5.4 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday I reported to the House on my visit to Hong Kong. The exchanges which followed that statement reflected the very deep concern felt by all hon. Members about the future of the territory in the wake of the recent horrific events in Peking. Very important questions are at issue here, and it is right that they should be fully aired in this House. The Government accordingly welcome this opportunity for further debate.

The House has before it the report on Hong Kong of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for its report. The Government's formal response will issue in due course. The House will share my view that that report addresses our concerns, and those of the people of Hong Kong, seriously and comprehensively.

We are all conscious of Britain's historic responsibility for Hong Kong's future, and of our obligation to act with vigour and determination in fulfilment of that responsibility. We have never sought to shirk that obligation. Indeed, we were guided by it when first we took the decision to enter into negotiations with the Chinese about the future of Hong Kong.

By treaty, 92 per cent. of the area of Hong Kong reverts to China in 1997. The remaining 8 per cent. could never be viable on its own. After 18 months of tough negotiation, it became clear that the Chinese Government were not willing to contemplate the continuation of British administration beyond 1996, so we set ourselves the task —with the support of the people of Hong Kong—of securing alternative arrangements which would maintain the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong and the freedoms and way of life of its people.

The agreement that we reached—the Joint Declaration —was widely recognised at the time, in Hong Kong, in this House and around the world, as the very best that could be arrived at in the circumstances. It was not an agreement imposed on Hong Kong, but one which the Executive and Legislative Councils were each able firmly to commend to the people of the territory. Under it, Hong Kong will have its own Government comprising Hong Kong people, not people brought in from China; the Socialist system and Socialist policies will not be imposed on Hong Kong from China; nor will Hong Kong pay taxes to China. Hong Kong's capitalist system and its way of life will continue, with all its human rights and freedoms, its laws and its legal system, its own freely convertible currency, its financial markets, its free port. None of that will change.

Hong Kong will conduct its own relations with other countries on matters such as trade, culture and civil aviation, and be able to conclude agreements on those subjects. It will continue to participate in international organisations as it does today. Entry into Hong Kong from China will continue to be regulated as at present, so that Hong Kong will not be flooded by immigrants from the mainland. By contrast, Hong Kong people will remain free to come and go as they please. Public order will be the responsibility of the Government of Hong Kong, as it is today. It is plainly provided that any Chinese military forces stationed in Hong Kong will not interfere in internal matters. I shall have more to say about that in a moment.

The Joint Declaration was—and is—a good agreement, and the people of Hong Kong continue so to regard it. That was confirmed by the Office of the Members of the Executive and Legislative Councils in the statement which it circulated to Members of this House on 16 June. Indeed it described it as a "triumph of diplomacy". The declaration is accepted on all sides as the basis for all that now needs to be done to rebuild confidence in Hong Kong and, in particular, to strengthen the Basic Law in which the provisions of the declaration are to be given legal effect.

I do not in any way seek to minimise the anxieties of Hong Kong people about the future. It was precisely to address those anxieties honestly and directly that I took the earliest possible opportunity to visit the territory after the events of 3 and 4 June. The Joint Declaration is, as I said during that visit, a text for the bad times as well as for the good. Events in China have not invalidated it, nor altered the assumptions on which it was based—on the contrary.

What is lacking today, and what must be restored, is confidence—and confidence that China will honour the agreement after 1997. That confidence has been gravely shaken. It certainly cannot be restored overnight. It will take time and effort. That is why China's attitude in the coming months and years will be of such crucial importance. China has reiterated her own commitment to the Joint Declaration, and we welcome that, but more— much more—will be needed to regain the trust of people in Hong Kong. There must be concrete steps to provide reassurance to the people of Hong Kong—steps that will need to be continued and reinforced over the months and years ahead. Once again, there are signs that the Chinese Government realise this. They must now act accordingly.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the Joint Declaration, and the treaty registered by it in the United Nations, for the first time gives a treaty base—recognised and signed by China—for the future of Hong Kong?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, but I hope that he and the House will forgive me if I do not give way as I customarily do. I have had the opportunity to answer questions on this matter for three and a half hours in the House, and to answer my hon. Friend in the Select Committee for about six hours. If I am allowed to continue my speech I shall come to what the Select Committee said.

As we have always recognised, and as the Select Committee said in terms,

"it is not possible to provide absolute guarantees for Hong Kong's future".

One feature has always been identified as providing some real assurance in that respect. That is the natural self-interest of China itself. It plainly must be in the interests of the Chinese Government—any Chinese

Government—to sustain the success of Hong Kong and to do so in the only way that it can be done—on the basis of the Joint Declaration and the principle of one country, two systems.

For our part, Her Majesty's Government of course accept the need to formulate policy, to take action so as to offer further assurance to the people of Hong Kong, to strengthen their confidence in the future. First, as I told the House on 5 July, a Bill of Rights for Hong Kong will be introduced as soon as possible. The Joint Declaration already states that the international covenants as applied to Hong Kong shall remain in force after that date. The draft Basic Law reflects this in article 39. These are very worthwhile achievements but, understandably, the people of Hong Kong are looking for more, and the Government accept their concerns. The proposed Bill of Rights will ensure that there is one fundamental legal text which sets out all the rights and freedoms that the people of Hong Kong currently enjoy. In 1997 it will form part of the existing law and will continue after the transfer of sovereignty in accordance with the provisions of the Joint Declaration.

Secondly, we shall firmly and painstakingly persist, in all the ways that are open to us, in making an effective input into the drafting of the Basic Law. The Basic Law drafting process is at present in suspense. The Chinese have said that they intend to prolong the present consultative period. In considering the further timetable for promulgation of the final text, the Chinese should give full weight to the need to produce a Basic Law which commands the widest possible support in Hong Kong, and to the need for sufficient time in which to produce it. That should take priority over all other considerations. I urge the Hong Kong people, and in particular those who have the opportunity to serve on the Basic Law drafting committee, to take full advantage of every opportunity to express their views so as to ensure that the draft is further improved.

When the drafting process is resumed, our priority will be—as it has been all along—to see that the Basic Law conforms fully with the spirit as well as the letter of the Joint Declaration. As co-signatories of the Joint Declaration, it is our right to insist upon that point. Moreover, getting the Basic Law right—and being seen to do so—will have a crucial effect on confidence in the run-up to 1997. If it is to boost confidence, it will need to meet the specific concerns that have been expressed about the current draft. I will give one or two examples.

The Foreign Affairs Committee has drawn attention to the very real anxieties about article 18 of the draft Basic Law. In its present form, this could enable the central Government in Peking to declare a state of emergency in Hong Kong after 1997. As I said to the House on 5 July, this is one matter that we are taking up with the Chinese authorities. In our discussions with them about the Basic Law, before the drafting process was suspended, we had already impressed upon them the need for this article to be very tightly defined. Following the events in Peking, this provision is now of even greater concern. It is clear that at the very least the special administrative region Government of Hong Kong will have to be directly and closely involved in any decision as to whether or not a state of emergency has arisen. As the Select Committee has also recommended, article 157 of the draft Basic Law, which deals with interpretation, will need to be carefully reconsidered. There are genuine worries about this article in Hong Kong and a way must be found to allay them.

Another very important concern, to which the Foreign Affairs Committee drew attention, is that of the stationing in Hong Kong of Chinese military forces. This goes to the heart of the fears of people in Hong Kong about their future. That is why we negotiated long and hard to secure agreement to the principle that Hong Kong would be responsible for its own internal security after 1997, and we achieved that objective. The provision is there, in annex one (section 12) of the joint declaration. The Hong Kong police force is being expanded to enable it to take on this role.

Nevertheless, the horrific events of 3 and 4 June have undoubtedly greatly intensified concern in Hong Kong on this point. We shall therefore be doing all that we can to bring home to the Chinese Government the fact that their deeds as well as their words will be of fundamental importance. On this issue, the Chinese should not lose the opportunity to send a clear message of reassurance to Hong Kong's people. The question was already under active discussion in the Joint Liaison Group. The work of the group is, for the moment, suspended, but the group will continue to have the key role in ensuring the implementation of the Joint Declaration. No one in Hong Kong would dispute that the Joint Liaison Group will need to meet again before long, with this issue at the top of the agenda.

The next issue with which I wish to deal has already commanded a good deal of attention in the House—the development of representative government. It is an issue which requires the most careful and considered judgment. The Government therefore noted with particular interest what the Foreign Affairs Committee had to say on the subject. We agree with the Select Committee that the views of Hong Kong people on this matter are of crucial importance. We have always sought to base our policy on the principle that the pace of development should reflect the wishes of the whole community.

The unanimous view expressed by OMELCO on 24 May was a very significant step towards the establishment of a consensus in Hong Kong. After the events of 3 and 4 June, we must seek to determine how far that consensus now extends. It would be wrong for us to seek to anticipate that study, but it is already clear that the Hong Kong Government will need to reconsider their present plans for the elections in 1991.

My visit to Hong Kong left me in no doubt about the importance of another major issue—the prospect that emigration from the territory, particularly but not only by well-qualified professionals and middle managers, will increase. Everything that has been achieved in Hong Kong has been built on the energy and ability of its people, so the emigration of talent is a matter of great concern. The House accepts, and I hope that the people of Hong Kong will come to understand, that the answer to this problem cannot be found in the prescription most frequently pressed in Hong Kong—the granting of an open-ended right of abode to all British dependent territories citizens in the territory. It is seen as an insurance policy, but unlike any other such policy it is an insurance policy on which claims could be made by all the potential beneficiaries at any time. The practical difficulties of absorbing hundreds of thousands—possibly millions—of people make that impossible to contemplate. It would be wrong to raise

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

expectations that we could not possibly meet. I do not believe that the House would support such a departure from the immigration policies pursued by successive British Governments since the early 1960s.

Nevertheless, it is surely right that we should do what we can to sustain in those people on whom the success and prosperity of Hong Kong significantly depends the confidence to remain. Their continued presence in the territory benefits everyone living there. If they lose faith in the future, all of Hong Kong will suffer. That is why we are working urgently on a scheme which will make some provision for people in both the private and public sectors on the basis of value of service to Hong Kong, as well as connections with Britain. New legislation may be necessary. Our response will be as generous as it can be, within the inevitable constraints.

Our objective will be to devise a scheme which is as open and fair as possible, consistent with the overriding aim of encouraging people whose service is of value to Hong Kong to remain there. That applies to those involved in the administration of Hong Kong—and not exclusively at the senior levels, and to those whose professional, technical, entrepreneurial and managerial skills are essential to helping Hong Kong to remain prosperous and stable. It also applies to those in particularly sensitive posts. A further, more detailed announcement will be made as soon as possible.

The international community at large has an important interest in Hong Kong's continuing success as a major financial and commercial centre. In our contacts with our partners and friends, we are emphasising that they, too —as democracies, and as major trading partners—have a role to play in sustaining confidence in the territory. We shall be making this point at the economic summit in Paris this weekend.

I was most interested in what my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) had to say on this subject over the weekend. Clearly we must distinguish between two distinct factors, which the Select Committee report identified. The first is the immediate need to reinforce confidence in Hong Kong. We hope that the scheme to which I referred will make an important contribution to that. The international community can help in that respect by making it clear that they continue to have confidence in the future of Hong Kong and in the Joint Declaration.

The second distinct factor is the action that might and should be taken in the case of some fundamental and overwhelming violation of the Joint Declaration. That is obviously something that we are all hoping to avoid and working to prevent, but we cannot, in all prudence, ignore the possibility. The people of Hong Kong need to be given the strongest possible assurance that, should the worst come to the worst, there would be help for those in need of a home of last resort. That reassurance would be greatly strengthened by a wide international acknowledgement that this is a problem with which no one country alone could cope. I have already discussed the issue with a number of Foreign Ministers. The House will have noted what Prime Minister Mulroney of Canada said in London on Tuesday, 11 July:

"We should all be ready to co-operate with the United Kingdom in the delicate and important task of re-establishing grounds for confidence among the people of Hong Kong that their territory has a secure, viable and democratic future well beyond 1997. The problem of Hong Kong is not only and just a problem for the United Kingdom. The problem of Hong Kong and its security and well being is a problem for the world."

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Before the Foreign Secretary leaves this central and important issue, will he say a word about the views of the governor of Hong Kong, which he has not yet mentioned? I think that it would be fair to say that the governor would not altogether go along with what the right hon. and learned Gentleman has said.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The governor's views—which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, were quite properly expressed to the Select Committee—have been taken into account both by the Government and by the Select Committee in reaching our conclusions. I wish to take this opportunity once again to pay tribute to the distinguished way in which the governor carries such a formidable burden upon his shoulders.

The task of turning the general concern of civilised nations into an explicit willingness at some future date to contemplate receiving people from Hong Kong is not something that can be easily achieved; it certainly cannot be achieved overnight. Over the coming weeks and months we shall be using every opportunity to raise the issue with our partners and friends.

The growing problem of human migration is one of the starkest and most intractable of our time. It has manifested itself most acutely within Hong Kong in the presence of almost 50,000 Vietnamese boat people. I told the House last week of the measures being taken to tackle this problem effectively and humanely. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will respond further to points on that issue in his closing speech.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): Can my right hon. and learned Friend give an assurance that physical force will not be used to compel those unfortunate men, women and children to return to a Communist country from which they have spent most of their lives trying to escape?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The balance of the argument in that respect was set out in my statement last week. It was also dealt with in the report of the Geneva conference. My hon. Friend will recollect the conclusion that for those who do not qualify as refugees there is no prospect of passing through Hong Kong to a future somewhere in the remainder of the world which cannot and does not exist. In those circumstances, the entire balance of argument must point in the direction of trying to secure their return to their own land. That was the view expressed by the Geneva conference, and we must lend all our efforts to that end.

Our deep, immediate and continuing anxiety for Hong Kong is inevitably linked to our wider concern about the course of events in China. The House, the Government and the British people have repeatedly condemned the Chinese Government's blatant and reckless use of force against unarmed civilians. In common with other countries, we have concluded that business as usual cannot and should not be sustained in present circumstances. China must be left in no doubt as to the damage that her international reputation has suffered, but in our response we must have clearly in mind what we want to achieve. We want a secure future for Hong Kong and we want China

to return to the path of genuine reform. Neither the international community, nor the Chinese people—nor, in particular, the people of Hong Kong—will gain if China is driven into inward-looking isolation.

It was with those considerations in mind that I announced a package of specific measures in my statement to the House on 6 June. Those steps have been paralleled by other Western countries. The Madrid European Council on 27 June agreed a set of measures reflecting those already taken by some partners, including the United Kingdom. The United States, Japan and others have adopted mutually reinforcing measures of their own. All are intended to bring home to the Chinese authorities the extent of our common concern.

However, in the interest not least of the people of Hong Kong, channels of communication must remain open. That was the clear view expressed when I was there last week. Hong Kong does not—indeed, cannot—wish to isolate China, and neither should we. For that reason, the Government do not accept the argument that we should impose blanket trade sanctions on China. Such measures have never worked in the past. They would be damaging to the Chinese people, for whom we have great respect, and with whom we wish to build a closer friendship, and they would be immediately damaging to Hong Kong, which has an enormous stake in China's economic development.

China and Hong Kong are each other's largest trading partner. Hong Kong provides nearly a third of China's foreign exchange earnings and two-thirds of her foreign investment. Sanctions would tend inevitably to drive the Chinese into a corner and would put a severe brake on the economic reform process which gives hope to the Chinese people for the future. Therefore, in common with the American Government, the Japanese and our EC partners, we do not intend to stand in the way of normal commercial dealings. For the time being, however, we have postponed consideration of concessional financing arrangements for new projects in China under the aid and trade provision. We are also suspending decisions on additional ECGD cover for China.

I told the House yesterday that the exhibition "British Expo: China 89" due to open in Peking in November has been postponed. The House will also be aware that the World Bank has deferred consideration of new loans to China, in view of the current economic uncertainty there. Those are all reasons for the Chinese authorities to demonstrate that they intend to stay on the path of economic reform and openness—an essential element of which must, as the European Council noted on 27 June, be respect for human rights.

At the end of the day, China will choose its own destiny, but measured and consistent expressions of concern from the international community about Chinese political repression can and will have a significant impact. Nowhere is that prospect more important than in Hong Kong, for Hong Kong's future must inevitably lie with China. The members of OMELCO, in their statement of 19 June, said:

"We are Chinese and proud of it".

However, they equally and rightly insist that Hong Kong's way of life is, and should remain, distinct. That is the essence of the assurance of "One country, two systems". The interests which led China freely to accept that undertaking remain as valid today as they were when the undertaking was given. If anything, they are stronger. In the economic sphere, it is no longer just a question of foreign exchange—millions of people in the neighbouring province of Guangdong are directly employed by Hong Kong enterprises.

China must recognise that her actions have damaged confidence in Hong Kong and that she has a vital role in repairing that damage. We have already been transmitting that message to the Chinese Government and we shall continue to do so. In the same spirit, and to the same end, it would, I think, be right for us to take advantage of any sensible opportunities that may arise for contacts for that purpose between Ministers with responsibility for Hong Kong.

For almost 150 years, Britain has administered Hong Kong with fairness, justice and dedication. We have forged a unique partnership between Britain and the territory's Chinese inhabitants. That partnership has survived many tests and has gone from strength to strength. The last eight years of British administration which lie ahead will pose new and difficult challenges, but our commitment to the people of Hong Kong will be as strong as ever. Her Majesty's Government will strive with all their energy to achieve a secure and succesful future for Hong Kong and its people.

5.29 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The Foreign Secretary has referred to his visit to Hong Kong and, as he will know, last month, through the courtesy of the Hong Kong Office, I was able to go there too. During my visit, an Air Force helicopter flew me along the border between the New Territories and the People's Republic of China. Almost immediately below I saw the forest of skyscrapers that is the Chinese city of Shenzhen.

A year ago, I was in Shenzhen and marvelled at the dynamism which had created that burgeoning and booming commercial centre in such a short period. Like others who at that time had the opportunity of visiting China, I was profoundly encouraged not only by the economic progress that China is making but, even more, by the implications for political liberalisation of that economic progress. I was able to discuss with Chinese officials the optimistic prospects for economic links between Shenzhen and Hong Kong, of which the Foreign Secretary has just spoken—such a tiny distance separating them; economic links both before and after 1 July 1997.

Now, sadly, it is impossible to use the word "optimistic" in relation to Hong Kong. The natural misgivings of the people of that territory about the unknown factors in the impending transfer to China had been alleviated by the positive achievement of the Joint Declaration of 1984 and the progress made since in drafting the Basic Law—progress involving genuine consultation between China and the people of Hong Kong. Now, developments in China, and especially the massacres in Peking, followed by the stream of executions since then, have made Hong Kong wary about how much it can trust the Peking regime to adhere to the Joint Declaration.

That is why, just as I did, the Foreign Secretary will have heard during his visit to Hong Kong from representatives of the people there—none of them, I am afraid, directly elected; that is something for which the Labour party when in government must bear responsibility with the Conservative party when in government—about safeguards for which they are looking in the period

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before the Basic Law is completed and before it goes forward for enactment by the National People's Congress of the Chinese People's Republic.

Many of those safeguards are considered in the report on Hong Kong of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs which was published the week before last. As I shall explain, I do not agree with all that report's conclusions and recommendations, but it is a most important document which contains much valuable material and many positive suggestions which ought to be adopted. I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends who, together with Conservative Members, worked so hard and expeditiously to complete that report.

The report deals with large matters and with matters which appear to be small but which, nevertheless, are important. For example, I draw attention to the recommendation in the report about the location of the British consulate general and the importance of it being prestigious. Those of us who were in Hong Kong not long ago and saw the huge demonstrations and signs outside the office of the New China news agency will know the symbolic importance that the people of Hong Kong will attach to the location of an office. I hope that, when the Government come to respond to the report, they will deal with that matter among a number of others.

The members of the Committee tried to come to terms with another problem to which the Foreign Secretary referred a moment ago—the apparently intractable problem of the boat people from Vietnam. No one who has seen the conditions in which the Vietnamese are held in Hong Kong—I in no way criticise the Hong Kong authorities who, in the circumstances, have done a miraculous job in providing conditions of cleanliness, good health and good food, but, nevertheless, the conditions are so awful that no one who has seen them can fail to be moved by the plight of the people in those centres and camps——

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one assurance that we can give the people of Hong Kong is that, however rough the going gets, we shall never hold refugees from Hong Kong in conditions quite as deplorable as those in which many Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong are held?

Mr. Kaufman: I very much hope that that would never occur. I am sure that it would not.

In its report, the Select Committee recommends mandatory repatriation of migrants from Hong Kong. I shrink from such a solution, but I can understand why the Committee arrived at that view. The flow has to stop, and it is arguable that the best way of stopping the flow is for potential migrants in Vietnam to witness the return of their compatriots and so realise that migration is fruitless.

I am more persuaded by the views put forward by the British Refugee Council which would entrench protections for human rights in any policy aimed at dealing with the problem. I value the council's recommendation that

> "People who are not granted asylum should not be returned to Vietnam unless there is clear evidence that it would be safe for them to do so, firm assurances are given that they will not be penalised in any way, and their well-being and resettlement are thoroughly monitored by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees."

The key to solving the problem and obtaining such assurances is to accept the British Refugee Council's views about the relationships with Vietnam. The council says:

> "The desperate poverty in Vietnam must be tackled as a matter of urgency and we urge Western governments to mount a major aid programme and improve relations with Vietnam.
>
> We believe that economic aid and improved relations will make a major contribution to improving the human rights situation which will also help to stem the flow of refugees. Economic development will encourage others to stay and those who have left to return."

The British Refugee Council goes on to say:

> "Normalisation of relations with Vietnam by the West and the lifting of trade and aid embargoes are essential, and should not be tied to negotiations about refugees. However, they will begin to address one of the root causes of migration. People will only stop leaving when they see hope for the future for them in Vietnam, and that depends on the resumption of international co-operation with the Government."

Those are sensible and important suggestions.

Meanwhile, I hope that when people in Hong Kong seek the right of abode in Britain and wonder why their demands are not immediately accepted, they will take into account the problems caused to them by the arrival in Hong Kong of migrants from Vietnam, who are only one eighth of the proportion of their population that British dependent territory passport holders in Hong Kong are of the population of the United Kingdom.

Much attention has understandably been focused on what the Select Committee's report says about demands for right of entry to Britain and right of abode here of Hong Kong British dependent territory passport holders, to which the Foreign Secretary referred this afternoon.

The Labour party agrees with the report's conclusion, which, as I understand it, is also the Government's view, that it would not be right to offer any commitment to those passport holders on the right of entry to the United Kingdom or the right of abode here.

I do not believe that it is possible to obtain or offer definite international guarantees of the kind proposed in the report to British dependent territory passport holders, but I agree with the spirit of the report that this is a matter on which international discussions should take place with a view to obtaining assurances about policy in the event of a crisis after the transfer of Hong Kong to China in 1997. I trust that that matter will be a major item on the agenda for this weekend's Paris summit, and on the agendas of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Kuala Lumpur in the autumn and of the European Community summit at the end of the year. It should also be the subject of discussions between the Government and the United States Administration.

The Select Committee suggested that limited relaxations of our immigration laws should be implemented for specific groups in Hong Kong, and we can travel a certain distance with the Committee in that respect. We see no difficulty in offering right of abode to the very small number of war widows. In the Labour party's policy review report published two months ago, we made a clear commitment to non-Chinese minorities in Hong Kong, to whom right of entry is also recommended by the Select Committee. We accept the Committee's recommendations in respect of certain students having a clear and specific link with this country through their physical presence here. Those are all small and finite categories. As the Government are still considering them, I understand why the Foreign Secretary did not mention those categories this afternoon. However, I hope that the Government will find

it possible to accept all those recommendations. They could so so without creating any controversy at all in this House.

We cannot agree with the Select Committee's recommendation for limited relaxation of our immigration laws in respect of two further categories, including people described as occupying key positions. Last week, when responding to the Foreign Secretary's statement on his return from Hong Kong, I told him that we recognise that certain Crown servants might feel or find themselves at risk as the transfer of Hong Kong to China approaches. We consider that it would be right for the Home Secretary to consider using his discretion under the Immigration Act 1971 in their favour, on an individual basis. The Committee's report also refers to the Home Secretary exercising his discretion under the British Nationality Act 1981. That option should also be considered positively. Such discretion should be used generously where appropriate, but it would not be right to create a special catch-all category of Crown servants, as the report recommends.

When I met Dame Lydia Dunn in Hong Kong and again in Britain, I was impressed by her argument—also made by those who argue for a blank right of abode, which we do not accept—that the creation of elite categories would be divisive and could not be defended in Hong Kong. Dame Lydia's view is that the creation of such categories would make it more difficult to govern Hong Kong. Still less do we accept the proposal to give assurances to people of affluence or influence in the private sector, which would be socially divisive. I see no reason why such people should be given preference over any other British dependent territory passport holders in Hong Kong. Morever, I cannot see how such a group can be defined, whether in an Act of Parliament or in an immigration rule, without introducing invidious distinctions. While we shall examine the scheme that the Foreign Secretary said the Government are considering, we have grave doubts about its implications.

While we go some but not all of the way with the Select Committee on the right of entry and abode, we accept almost completely its recommendations for progress with democracy in Hong Kong. I hope that, when the Government respond to the Select Committee, they will not go for the lowest common denominator—as they did when the Hong Kong Government issued a White Paper on representative government last year. That was a serious error, as is confirmed by the events that have taken place in China since then.

We concur with the Committee's view that 50 per cent. of the places in the Legislative Council should be directly elected in 1991 and that full direct elections should be introduced for 1995. We also agree with the Committee that the chief executive should be elected, but prefer election by direct adult suffrage rather than through an electoral college after the transfer of sovereignty in 1997, as proposed by the Select Committee. We also agree with the suggestion made to me when I was in Hong Kong that the chief executive should be made accountable to the Legislative Council. It is most important that as much direct, representative, responsible and accountable democracy as possible should be available in Hong Kong before its transfer to China in 1997.

We see merit in the Committee's recommendations that assurances should be sought from the Chinese Government on the Basic Law and the Joint Declaration. It would be constructive to achieve continuity in the interpretation of laws existing before the creation of the Hong Kong special adminstrative region, so that there can be confidence in the judicial system. We support the Committee's recommendation for a Bill of Rights and are glad that the Government are already acting on it. It is important that the Basic Law accords in every particular with the Joint Declaration.

In debate on the Basic Law one year ago, I drew attention to certain apparent discrepancies between the Basic Law and the Joint Declaration and expressed the hope that they would be remedied. For that reason if for no other, it is important that the Hong Kong representatives should resume their work on drafting the Basic Law. I understand completely why they withdrew from that work, and in the circumstances they were right to do so. However, as the draftsmen's absence gives the representatives of the People's Republic of China a much freer hand and would provide them with excuses if the Basic Law is regarded as being unsatisfactory, when it is completed, it is proper that the Hong Kong representatives should return to the work of drafting it. Even so, I agree with the Foreign Secretary that the People's Republic should consider favourably extending the timetable for the Basic Law process. The British Government should strongly represent that view to the Chinese Government.

The Foreign Secretary spoke of making contacts with Chinese Ministers where appropriate, and mentioned the possibility of meeting his counterpart at the United Nations in the autumn. The right hon. and learned Gentleman should also consider an early formal and specific meeting with his counterpart, because it is important to put issues directly to the Government of the People's Republic. Above all, and in line with the view of the Select Committee, the Government should put it to the Government of the People's Republic that the People's Liberation Army should not be present in Hong Kong after the transfer in 1997. To the whole world, the current image of the People's Liberation Army is one of blood and barbarism. Even if the People's Republic expresses contrition—which so far it shows no sign of doing—it will take a long time for that image to fade.

I find particularly repulsive reports in today's newspaper of a trip around Tiananmen square yesterday for western tour operators. I find equally repulsive the mercenary and cold-blooded statements made by some of those tour operators when they visited the area where the massacre took place and saw physical signs of it. It is clear that the Chinese Government believe that the slaughter in Tiananmen square can be easily forgotten and that, after routine protests by western liberals, it can quickly be business as usual between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the democracies. It is essential that the Chinese Government are made to understand with crystal clarity that memories are not so short, and that horror cannot so speedily be erased.

That is why we on this side take exception to the attitude expressed yesterday by the Foreign Secretary towards the mission of the 48 Group which is due to visit China in October. We deplore any British business group visiting China so soon after the massacres. To exchange pleasantries in Peking so soon after a barbaric crime is insensitive enough. To drive past the site of that atrocity, as the mission is bound to do during the five days when the group is due to be in Peking, is even worse. Worse still is to tout as an attraction a meeting with Li Peng, the Prime

[Mr. Kaufman]

Minister of the Government responsible for the massacres. Yet the Department of Trade and Industry is providing financial assistance to the mission. The brochure says:

"DTI support will be available to participants in the mission on the usual terms, as a contribution to travel cost. Official facilities will be drawn upon to the full."

Lord Young, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, is on record as welcoming and commending the mission.

In the full immediate flush of horror at the Peking massacre, the Foreign Secretary said:

"there can be no question of continuing normal business with the Chinese authorities."—[*Official Report*, 6 June 1989; Vol. 154, c. 30.]

That firm and clear attitude has not lasted much longer than the time that it took to utter the words. Yesterday, the Foreign Secretary took every opportunity to defend not only the trade mission but Government support for it.

I wish that the right hon. and learned Gentleman would understand what use the Chinese authorities will make of the arrival of such a high-powered mission officially sponsored by the British Government. The propaganda value is incalculable. Does he not realise that to continue Government sponsorship of such a mission will encourage the Chinese Government to believe that, no matter what they do in the future or have done in the recent past, the British Government will accept it? The Government should cancel their sponsorship of the mission without delay. To continue sponsorship will send absolutely the wrong signal to Peking.

I do not say that there must never again be trade relations between Britain and China. Nor do I say that there must never again be cordial or even close relations. China will outlive this regression, just as it outlived the cultural revolution, to rejoin the wider world community in a more open and encouraging way than ever before. If China is to become a welcome member of the world community again, with all the wisdom and experience that that ancient nation can bring to civilised exchanges, she must first demonstrate that what happened in Peking last month was an aberration that will not be repeated. While the Chinese Government continue the present sickening series of executions, many of us will not be convinced.

Yet we want to be convinced. We want to believe that the enormous encouragement that we have drawn from the remarkable Chinese experiment in economic pluralism can be resumed. Our admiration for the Chinese people, their skill, industry, cheerfulness and bravery, continues unabated. Our admiration for those who stood up publicly for democratic values at their own peril is admiration for the real China, which many of us have visited and marvelled at.

We want to resume close friendship and personal relations with the Chinese Government. We ask them to make that possible. We say to them, end the executions, give clear and firm assurances to Hong Kong, and show by responding to what we ask for on the Basic Law and the Joint Declaration that, although we have been living through a nightmare, that nightmare will soon come to an end.

5.53 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): It is now some 20 years since I first went to Hong Kong, and in the intervening period I have returned there many times. I have developed an immense admiration for the people of Hong Kong and their achievements, which have grown progressively faster over those two decades.

When the Joint Declaration was signed it was natural that the people of Hong Kong were anxious about the future. But in the few years that have elapsed since then confidence in Hong Kong has grown, and economic activity and financial success have continued and even increased. Then came the tragic disaster of last month.

The Foreign Secretary was absolutely right to go to Hong Kong. He has been criticised in some quarters for it. He must have known the reception that he would receive, but his visit was invaluable not only for him to see at first hand the circumstances in Hong Kong and to inform his colleagues in the Government of them, but as a lightning conductor for the intense feeling on the island. For that he should be most strongly commended. His services to Hong Kong and to this country in so doing have been invaluable.

In the words of some friends of mine in Hong Kong, we are still stunned by the traumatic experience through which we have passed. Many of us here, too, are still stunned by the trauma in Peking and other big cities in the People's Republic of China. I acknowledge immediately that I am one of them. No one believed that it could possibly happen. How could it happen when the people at the top had themselves suffered during the cultural revolution? Deng Xiaoping said to me, "I am here only because Mao Tse-Tung said that not a hair on my head was to be damaged." His son was thrown out of his college window, his back was broken and he was denied treatment. How could those in authority in Peking have allowed the massacre to happen, or indeed authorised it? We still need to know the whole story. Perhaps we shall never know it, but the ghastly tragedy was there for us all to see.

The pernicious and dishonest journalist, Edward Pearce, has accused me of condoning the massacre. I have never condoned it for a moment. I am not ashamed that in 1972 as Prime Minister I brought about full diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. It was in the interests of this country and Hong Kong that we should have friendly relations with China. In my first discussions with Mao Tse-Tung I obtained from him, in the presence of Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping and Hua Guofeng, an undertaking that nothing serious would happen in Hong Kong and that the changeover in 1997 would be peaceful. That was a valuable undertaking from those in control then and who proved to retain control in the following years. I could not possibly condone for one moment the massacre in Peking and the executions and shootings in the other cities that followed.

I now come to the position in Hong Kong today. The Foreign Secretary is right to emphasise that an increase in confidence is required above all. He would be the first to add that that is the most difficult thing in the world to bring about. It is difficult to achieve that in any circumstances, let alone in circumstances as bad as these.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) that perhaps Peking will now realise that it has shocked not only Hong Kong and Britain but the rest of the world, and that it will take a

considerable time to restore confidence. It remains to be seen whether, as happened after the cultural revolution, there emerge people who want to promote peaceable development in that enormous country, not only economically but politically. I do not underestimate the political difficulties of changing organisations and institutions in a country of 1,050,000,000 people. I have never been able to work out what the most admirable constitutional arrangement would be and I have never met anybody who could. That must be acknowledged. But until we see proof that the movement is political as well as economic, we shall find it very difficult to regain our confidence in Peking.

I have differed in the past with my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on the question of the speed and the form of democratisation in Hong Kong. He mentioned it again today, saying that it was receiving consideration. My view is that the only action that we can take in the near future that would do something to restore confidence in Hong Kong is to speed up both the timing and the method of democratisation. I am afraid that I have always believed that the advice that my right hon. and learned Friend received was wrong. It came from the wrong people, who had an interest in maintaining the present circumstances, first, because they could not trust democracy in Hong Kong and, secondly, because they wanted to be in a position to hand over Hong Kong in 1997.

Let me repeat my request, which I have made in two earlier debates: that my right hon. and learned Friend—who is backed by the organisations in Hong Kong—should speed up the process and the method of democratisation.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I do not think that anyone in the House dissents from my right hon. Friend's sentiments about democracy in Hong Kong. Does he recall that fears used to be expressed that the two most widely organised political bodies there would turn out to be the Communist party and the Guomindang? Does that still obtain, and is it a danger that we need to consider?

Mr. Heath: I agree that that was said. The answer is to get the other organisations in Hong Kong going, which would maintain the democratic basis. Surely we as a country have enough experience to help Hong Kong to organise its parties in that way.

I know that others have taken the view that Hong Kong will never have a party organisation. I do not accept that, and what my hon. Friend has said denies it. The existing groups—even if they are not categorised as political parties—are there and will act. I hope that any status that the Communist party in Hong Kong may have had has now been demolished by events in Peking, but that does not alter the fact that we must play our part—or, at least, the governor and his council must play their part—in the organisation of a great democratic system in Hong Kong.

I do not agree that those in Hong Kong have a right of abode, or that we are under an obligation to create such a right. I think that it is our responsibility to consider the practical side of the question as well as any moral or traditional, historic, national or legal obligations. The practical problems are on our doorstep: there are between 40,000 and 50,000 Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. Have we been able to persuade the world to accept them? Not at all. A mere trickle is returning to Vietnam. Of the 29,000 Ugandan Asians expelled by Idi Amin, we took 25,000; the Americans took 1,000, the Canadians 1,000 and the Swedes 2,000. That was a big enough problem, and some of us have been damned for it ever since. With Hong Kong, we face a major practical difficulty.

What worries me particularly is the fact that, if we accept an obligation in 1997 because of circumstances that may exist then, we shall place on our successors a burden that we ourselves need not shoulder. There will be a different Government—perhaps of the same party, but with different people in it—*[Laughter.]* Naturally, I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary will still be here.

A different Parliament—perhaps two Parliaments hence—will have to carry out the obligation that we have accepted and that we shall have placed upon it. I do not consider that a proper responsibility for us to accept for the future.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that perhaps the worst betrayals that this country has ever perpetrated have been when we have made promises to, for instance, countries in central Europe without being aware of the circumstances in which we might have to honour those promises? That entirely supports his view that, if we made a promise now that would have to be implemented by others in the future, we might find that they—for good reasons—had to go back on it.

Mr. Heath: It will be a wonderful day when I make a speech, on whatever subject, into which my hon. Friend does not introduce the European Community and its treaty.

Mr. Budgen: That is not the point.

Mr. Heath: Of course, a nation is responsible for any treaty into which it enters, but those treaties could have been changed at some future date under the terms of a later treaty. I do not wish to become involved in an argument about whether they should ever have been established; that is part of history, and will be in the memoirs.

Then we come to the worrying question of people leaving Hong Kong in the intervening period. I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend that he has an obligation where officials are concerned, but I should have thought that it would be possible to deal with that on a financial basis with sufficient inducements for people to stay until 1997, with an undertaking that they were prepared to do so. I do not believe, however, that the Government are obliged to make an arrangement involving the managers of private enterprises. That must depend on the enterprises themselves, and they have an interest, in exactly the same way as Peking has an interest, in maintaining the position of Hong Kong for its financial and industrial and trading future.

Once we get past that, the risk of accusations of discrimination is immense. The argument will go as follows: "You can say that so-and-so is more valuable to Hong Kong than the man in the street, but if people are to suffer, why is he to be let off while the man in the street suffers?" It is as simple as that. I cannot see a means of implementing a layer of special arrangements without Parliament and the Government being accused of unjustifiable discrimination. That is the immediate problem that awaits us.

[Mr. Heath]

Let us try to look to the future. We hope that Peking will now have recognised the disastrous impact on the world of what has happened. Did it realise at the time? If so, why did it allow the world to see it on television? Why should all the telephone lines have been open throughout the episode? Let us hope that it now realises and will change; and let us see a change similar to that which followed the cultural revolution and to what—as far as we know—is happening in the Soviet Union today.

We can say this about Peking: when it gives international undertakings—this is an international undertaking, registered with the United Nations—it adheres to them. When it gives financial undertakings to, for instance, investment banks, in my experience, it adheres to those. That may be one hope for the future—that, having given an undertaking registered with the United Nations, Peking will adhere to it.

Let us be open and frank. We now face the most difficult task in politics: to remain patient in unknown circumstances that we cannot control and to which we can see no immediate answer. I hope that, both here and in Hong Kong, we can prove that we are able to master it.

6.9 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): It is always difficult to follow the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) because his speeches are very carefully listened to and well worth listening to. I agree with almost all that he said, except for the curious assertion that we cannot take a decision or make a commitment today because it would lay a burden on future Governments and future generations. I should have thought that that was the basis on which we always go ahead. It is not an unreasonable basis in this area, too.

Five years ago, in 1984, I first spoke in the House on the subject of the Joint Declaration and Hong Kong. On that occasion I remember congratulating—I do so now—the Government on having put together the Joint Declaration. I believed then, and I believe now, that it is the foundation on which we must go forward. It was a not inconsiderable diplomatic achievement. However, I recall saying at the time that that good foundation would be significantly undermined if Britain failed to honour its moral obligations. I also recall saying that I was depressed because I did not hear the genuine fears, anger and sense of betrayal which were felt at that time in Hong Kong being echoed in this House. It gives me no pleasure whatsoever to note that, following the appalling and tragic events in Tiananmen square, the predictions and comments that I made then have come all too tragically true.

In a sense, it does not matter how much faith Britain puts in the Joint Declaration, or how much faith China puts in it. To be able to make it work, we have to ensure that there is faith in Hong Kong that it will work. If there is no faith, the basis upon which it was drawn up—one of the articles to which we committed ourselves being to hand over Hong Kong with a prosperous economy and a stable society—will be undermined. The people of Hong Kong will believe that the agreement is not worth the paper on which it is written and that it cannot be delivered. In a real sense, Hong Kong is the silent partner in this bilateral agreement between Britain and China. The survival and success of the Joint Declaration requires the people of Hong Kong to believe that it can work and that it will be observed.

The Foreign Secretary was absolutely right when he identified the purpose of the Government's actions and those of the House as being to recreate a sense of trust and belief in the Joint Declaration so that Hong Kong can remain economically prosperous and socially stable.

It is my case—I argued it five years ago, I have argued it in the lead-up to this debate and I argue it now—that at the heart of the re-establishment of that trust is the need to provide the people of Hong Kong with the capacity, as free citizens, to leave Hong Kong. Part of the Joint Declaration and of the agreement that the Government rightly reached with the Chinese was that the Chinese would follow what they referred to as an open door policy. People would be free to leave Hong Kong. However, an open door is useless unless, when one walks through it, there is somewhere to go. It may be that the Government of the People's Republic of China will honour their side of the open door agreement, but that agreement is meaningless unless we are prepared to underpin it, too. The freedom to have somewhere to go to is the bottom line in any action that is taken to ensure that the people of Hong Kong feel confident about the future.

We can have as much democracy as we wish, but it will not work if people are always looking over their shoulder at a tyrant who is just round the corner and who is prepared to lock them up for their views—if not today, tomorrow. It would be wrong of us to believe that democracy is like some magic charm that we can wave in the face of People's Liberation Army tanks and they will go away. If that was our belief, God knows, it must have been snuffed out after the terrible events in Tiananmen square. What will happen if those events are, despite our best efforts, recreated in Nathan road, Kowloon after 1997?

There is no earthly reason why those who are rich enough, clever enough or skilled enough will want to stay to make Hong Kong work and keep it prosperous and socially stable if, at the end of the day, the status that they are generously granted is not that of a free citizen but that of a refugee. If people do not stay now, the capital which underpins the financial stability of Hong Kong will leave, too. The question whether we honour that right of abode is not one that can be traded off against greater democracy. It lies at the heart of and underpins everything else that we do to establish and preserve stability in Hong Kong.

Before I come to that matter, let me deal with a few of the comments that are germane to the debate and that were referred to by the Foreign Secretary and others. I join the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) in congratulating the Government on having shifted their position. For the past five years all of us have argued that the issue of democracy is very important—that the arrival and takeover by the People's Republic of China of the special administrative region of Hong Kong should be more than simply a question of sending in a man with a screwdriver to change the nameplates on the door of Government house. An established democratic process in Hong Kong would ensure that that would happen.

The Foreign Affairs Committee report was correct and wise in saying that the time has come to increase the pace of democracy in Hong Kong. It said something else which

is also important. The decisions that must be taken about the pace of the adoption of democracy in Hong Kong are delicate and careful ones. They could unbalance political and economic stability in Hong Kong. In that sense, the Foreign Affairs Committee report was correct. What must guide us in the decisions that are taken about the pace of democracy are the views of the people of Hong Kong. It is far better that they should take their own decisions, in so far as that is possible, about the pace of democratisation than that we should draw up blueprints in Westminster or Whitehall.

Some of the ingredients of the democratisation process include a chief executive in Hong Kong. I share the view that it would be better if the chief executive were elected on a free franchise of all voters in Hong Kong than in an electoral college. The time of the excellent governor, Sir David Wilson, will run out naturally before 1997. I take the view that it would be extremely helpful to Hong Kong if his replacement were to be not a Foreign Office official but a politician, or some other person of independent standing in the United Kingdom.

It is correct to say that the Joint Declaration is the basis for going forward. There are voices——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I am astonished by what the right hon. Gentleman has just said. Does he not think that at some point before 1997 it would be better for a Hong Kong Chinese national to take over that role to prepare for the role as chief executive instead of importing someone from the United Kingdom? I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman is offering his own services. However, it is a strange suggestion.

Mr. Ashdown: I hear the hon. Gentleman's words, but there are two arguments. I do not intend to tell him now which I think is the better argument. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman believes, as I do, that the views of the people of Hong Kong are important. The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is laughing. I wonder what the Government's stated view on this is now? There is a balanced argument, which I shall put to the hon. Gentleman in the terms in which it was put to me by very senior people in Hong Kong. The prevailing view among the Chinese on OMELCO and UMELCO is that it may be better not to have a Hong Kong national in those circumstances precisely because of the divisions that it might cause. The view in Hong Kong, and it is one to which the House must pay attention, is that it would be better to have an independent and objective person from the United Kingdom. I ask the hon. Gentleman to think a little more carefully about that.

The Joint Declaration is the right basis for going forward. There are those in Hong Kong, including Martin Lee, who believe that it should be scrapped. That would be wrong, dangerous and destabilising. We should strengthen the Joint Declaration by any means that we can. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said that the Chinese are good at honouring agreements. He is correct, but there is one exception—the Sino-Tibetan agreement of 1951, which, rather chillingly, used the phrase, "One party —two systems". That agreement has been repudiated and ignored, leading to the destruction of religious, cultural and political systems, the flight of 100,000 people from Tibet and the death by starvation and execution of 100,000 more. Almost as a dress rehearsal for the events in Tiananmen square, two months earlier there was a major descent on dissident elements in Tibet and hundreds, if not thousands, of people were summarily arrested at midnight on March 7.

I am not sure that I can take the same comfort in the Chinese honouring agreements as did the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup. The Government should consider reinforcing the Joint Declaration, or perhaps the Basic Law internationally in the United Nations, not just by its registration as a treaty, but by passing a resolution before the Security Council. As China has a veto, it would be interesting to see how it would react. The Government should consider reinforcing the Joint Declaration or the Basic Law by guaranteeing powers or appointing people to scrutinise and investigate its operation.

I now come to the Basic Law and the legal system. I welcome the Government's agreement that we should have a Bill of Rights, but I ask them to look carefully at the June 1989 Amnesty report which points out some worrying factors about the use of the death penalty in Hong Kong and safeguards against torture and arbitrary detention.

I share the Foreign Secretary's view on sanctions. I do not believe that sanctions would be appropriate at present, but the Government should recognise that China may be considered for chair of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights later this year. I hope that the Government will make it clear that any such decision would be extremely unwelcome and that they will oppose it.

On nationality, I believe that there is a moral obligation. Britain has handed over people to their own Governments many times before, rightly and properly, in the dismantlement of our empire. But we have never handed over an entire people to another Government, let alone to a Communist tyranny. We cannot remove the special responsibility for that special act by irresponsible scaremongering with figures such as 3·25 million. Everyone who has studied this matter knows that there is no possibility of 3·25 million people coming to Britain before 1997. A poll carried out by the *South China Morning Post* shows that 6 per cent. might come here before 1997. However, it is possible that they will come here if, to use the governor's expression, Armageddon should strike after 1997. The Government have already accepted responsibility for providing homes for the people of Hong Kong should Armageddon strike. The difference between the Government's proposals and mine is that their proposals would not allow an orderly transferral of citizens, but instead would require a panic plan to house penniless refugees.

What would happen if we gave right of abode now? Perhaps 6 per cent. would come here. However, as 1997 approached, many others would make preparations to take out an insurance policy in Britain in case the worst should happen. Hong Kong Chinese tell me that they would begin investing in Britain and establishing subsidiaries of Hong Kong firms here. They would prepare for that eventuality by diversifying their businesses.

Instead of orderly preparation, as was considered in the Corry report which suggested that under those circumstances there was a real possibility of economic benefit to Britain, and instead of an orderly approach to a desperate human problem, the Government are producing policies that rely on a mass influx of penniless, destitute refugees. Their policy is designed to bring about the very scenario that they say that they are trying to avoid.

[Mr. Ashdown]

Peter Kellner was right when he wrote in *The Independent:*

"What would really mess things up would be for Hong Kong's business people, teachers, doctors and engineers to settle in the United States, Australia and West Germany and for its pensioners, unmarried mothers, waiters and street-cleaners to come to Britain."

Mr. Adley: Everyone seems to consider the problem in terms of United Kingdom immigration policy. Will the right hon. Gentleman consider the following scenario for Hong Kong, which is more likely and would be more damaging? Hong Kong has the Joint Declaration because of its usefulness to China. If we were to do as the right hon. Gentleman suggests and gave people in Hong Kong the right of abode now, and anything should happen in the next eight years to create a blip in confidence and people started to leave Hong Kong in numbers, a slow departure could become a flood and Hong Kong could lose some of its best people. It would then lose its attraction to China. Where would Hong Kong be without its attraction to China?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman's useful interruption takes me to my next point. The Government's argument is that that would encourage just such an exodus. At present there is no evidence for that. Why should people leave Hong Kong at present? It has a growth rate of 8 per cent. a year, it has a much more pleasant climate than ours and it is a well-ordered and beautiful city. The Government have provided their own answer by saying that they will give a right of abode in Britain to make sure that the skilled people and the administrators will stay in Hong Kong. They argue that the way to make sure that the skilled remain in Hong Kong is to give them the right of abode in Britain. If that applies to those people, why does it not apply to the rest?

Unless the assurance of the ability to leave is given, the people of Hong Kong will begin to leave. That is exactly what is happening. The Canadians are setting up seminars in hotels in Hong Kong to attract the best people to Canada because they do not have the confidence to stay in Hong Kong. The French are issuing passports to those working in French banks. When Singapore offered the opportunity of relaxation, there were 25,000 people outside the Singapore offices. Just down the coast, there is a large population of Chinese with Portuguese passports and the Portuguese have given them the right of abode.

As a result, families are being split and the best and the brightest are leaving Hong Kong. There are the beginnings of a flight of capital. Once again Government policy seems absolutely dedicated to undermining the financial and social stability that they wish to preserve, weakening the credibility of the Hong Kong administration and increasing instability. That policy is mad and nonsensical. The Government's selective approach is divisive and against the recommendation of the Hong Kong administration and adds to the worry about that general policy.

There is another broader consequence. The sense of betrayal and anger and the concern about Britain not living up to her responsibilities are not confined to Hong Kong but are spreading to other nations round the Pacific rim. A senior British business man who runs one of the most established firms in the colony said to me that the Government's actions had the potential of doing as much damage to Britain's interests in the far east and the Pacific basin as Britain's actions in Suez did to our interests in the middle east.

We should offer right of abode. That is not too much. If people think that it is too much, perhaps we should try to reinsure that risk internationally. I was interested in the amended plan, published in a newspaper article the other day, put forward by the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), and I hope that we will hear more details. It may offer a way forward. In that article, he said that there must be a way round this difficult matter, if sensible brains can address it properly.

This is not just a moral issue. It is a practical way of underpinning democracy in Hong Kong. The only power that the people of Hong Kong will have to pit against the might of the Chinese Government after 1997 will be the power to withdraw the one thing that China needs so badly —a prosperous Hong Kong. If we make that power a reality, the power to limit the PRC's actions will be stronger. That is why I believe that our commitment to the establishment and preservation of democracy after 1997 depends on ensuring that we make a commitment before 1997 that the Chinese can leave Hong Kong if they wish.

This is not the first time that we on the Liberal and Social Democrat Benches have stood alone making these arguments. I did this five years ago. My hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) did it about a year ago and my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) has done it several times. I am proud to say that our party believes that we have a moral and practical duty to honour the right of abode that underpins democracy in Hong Kong.

I am depressed by two factors. First, I am depressed by the attitude of the official spokesman for the Labour party, the right hon. Member for Gorton. It is incomprehensible that the Labour party voted against the 1981 regulations the consequences of which it is prepared to accept. I contrast the Labour party's words in that debate, when it declared its opposition to that legislation, with the attitude that it is taking today in support of the Government. I especially remember the words of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who is now deputy leader of the Labour party. On 4 June 1981, in committing the Labour party to repeal the legislation, he said:

"The necessity for repeal and replacement is all the greater, not least because the Bill is largely based not on Government theories about nationality, but on Government fears about immigration."—[*Official Report*, 4 June 1981; Vol. 5, c. 1159.]

Now we note that the Labour party is joining in fanning those fears about immigration.

I remember the words of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) when he summed up that debate:

"Nationality is a fundamental concept which ought to be decided on principle and not on expediency. The Bill is shot through with expediency from start to finish, which springs from the artificial fears which the Conservative Party and others have attempted to create among the British people about the prospect of others immigrating to this country."—[*Official Report*, 4 June 1981; Vol. 5, c. 1178.]

Brave words, but abandoned words. I think of the Labour party in its great period, when it helped with the dismantlement of empire. I think of the Labour party as a great defender of civil liberties, the rights of ethnic minorities and international justice. I compare that with

what I see now—a sham, hollow replica of that Labour party. We now see the new model Labour party facing its first moral challenge—and it has failed.

I am depressed at the attitude that the House takes to these matters. We have never in our history taken a decision like this. Of course, we must hand back Hong Kong in 1997—we have no other option—but that means the territory, not necessarily the people. I ask the House to pause and think of the enormity of the act that we are contemplating. We hand over 6 million people to a Communist tyranny, all of whom are our responsibility, half of whom are our passport holders and the majority of whom fled from that tyranny in fear of their lives. We hand them over to a tyranny of old men who have only recently slaughtered their young citizens on the streets of the main square of their capital city for daring to believe in democracy.

The House shrugs its shoulders. It says, "We can do nothing about this. There is no way that we can help in that circumstance." My party does not believe that, and we shall divide the House. Britain is now writing the last pages in the history of its empire. If the House allows the Government to get their way in this matter, there will have been complicity in ensuring that those last pages are grubby, shameful and discreditable pages in what should be an important and glorious history.

6.35 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs will be grateful, I know, to nearly all right hon. and hon. Members for the way in which they have received its report after its inquiry into the position in Hong Kong. It is always nice for members and the hard-working staff of Select Committees to have their work appreciated. In fact, it is nice to get their reports debated at all. We certainly appreciate the comments that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and others have made about this study.

It was obvious that in the first place the reception given to the Select Committee's report in Hong Kong was very different. There were cries of "Shame" and "Dishonourable", and many other rough words were used. I, for one—I suspect that I speak for all other members of the Select Committee—see nothing dishonourable in stating firmly and clearly at the outset what we are capable of doing and what we think should be done. Nothing could be worse—as others have said more eloquently than I—than making commitments now that later, disastrously, we cannot keep.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): Does my right hon. Friend accept that one of the most telling paragraphs in the Select Committee's report is paragraph 4.10, which discusses the scale of the problem? The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) glossed over what could be a major problem. Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is a genuine problem in terms of refugees seeking to qualify as British dependent territory citizens and adding to the numbers?

Mr. Howell: If I have time, I shall consider those matters in more detail.

Having had the opportunity to talk to a number of visitors from Hong Kong since the visit by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, I do not think that it is too optimistic to say that, on further study of what my right hon. and learned Friend, the Select Committee report and many people who are interested in Hong Kong's future are trying to say, there has been a slightly better and less hostile reception.

I have no doubt that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary has shown courage—the courage to say no. That is a difficult act of statesmanship. He has been accused, as we have, of not fulfilling obligations. We have unique obligations to the people of Hong Kong. In a sense, my right hon. and learned Friend is the embodiment of the fulfilment of those obligations, with his ceaseless visits to the territory and, above all, his achievement of an agreement that is unique in history. I remind hon. Members that one of the treaty partners—the People's Republic of China—agrees to forswear the right for its political system to be operated in a piece of territory that will be within its sovereign control. It is extraordinary that there will be capitalism and no Socialism will be allowed. It would be unconstitutional for Socialism—I apologise to Opposition Members—to operate in the special administrative region of Hong Kong. My right hon. and learned Friend has gone almost as far as possible in statecraft and politics in dealing and grappling with this appallingly difficult issue.

We are now moving into the realms of psychology and psychological reassurances, and some of the most complex and difficult issues that the House has ever been asked to face, particularly the unique issue of how we devise reassurances. It is not a matter of keeping people here, letting them go or allowing them in, but how to devise reassurances to keep people in another place—in Hong Kong. That is a difficult, complex issue.

There are three matters raised in the report with which I wish to deal, and the first is relations with China. The report carefully examined the relationship between the two treaty partners, ourselves and the People's Republic of China. We had some fairly firm words to say in paragraph 3.5 about the importance of further discussions and advice on the Basic Law, discussions in the joint liaison group, and any administrative changes in Hong Kong itself being built on the principle of recognising the needs of Hong Kong. During our visit to the territories, we heard and examined suggestions—we found no hard evidence or validity for them—from many leading opinion-makers in Hong Kong that not enough account had been taken of the needs of Hong Kong and that too much attention had been paid to second-guessing and apprehensions about what the Government in Peking really want for Hong Kong.

That period has passed. I do not think that there was validity for such fears, but they existed, and it is important for the Government to ensure that, from now on, not a scintilla of doubt is left in people's minds that the British and the Hong Kong Administration are pursuing the interests of Hong Kong. We must ensure that the Basic Law—which the Chinese are drafting and have reasserted is to be promulgated on the original schedule, although the length of the consultation period has been extended—at least conforms with the Joint Declaration, the remarkable document that was secured by my right hon. and learned Friend five years ago.

The situation is reinforced by the simple fact that the PRC now has a vastly greater interest in moving in a way that will maintain the stability of Hong Kong. In a sense, the dangerous and unpredictable giant has weakened itself

[Mr. Howell]

by the horrors of the night of 3 and 4 June in Tiananmen square. It is now as much in China's deep interests as it is in our interests to see that everything necessary is done to maintain stability in the territory. That is what the Select Committee has to say about that matter. Perhaps hon. Members will elaborate on it.

The second matter is democracy. It is quite right that Hong Kong must decide. That must be the governing principle. The Select Committee took the liberty of offering its view. In discussions, the Select Committee did not see why it should not offer its own views, given the way in which the democracy issue is handled and is germane to maintaining stability in the territory. Our strong recommendation is that democracy should be entrenched before 1997. The recommendation is ahead of the decision that was taken by the Hong Kong Administration and the British Government before the massacres, and ahead of the view that was taken at that time by the Office of the Members of the Executive and Legislative Councils, on 24 May. Since then, I have heard that OMELCO is again examining the matter and is moving to support for an even more rapid timetable. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will keep in close touch with that matter, the development of ideas within the territory, and the move towards entrenching democracy.

There has been a turnaround. There were people who used to say, "We have done very well without democracy in Hong Kong; why do we need it? It is destabilising and will bring out the Kuomintang and other things." Quite often, the same people are now saying the opposite—that the dangers of introducing democracy and stability too quickly are more than outweighed by the imperative need to ensure that Hong Kong is a strongly entrenched democratic institution and society by 1997 and that that will give it a strong and vibrant place under the sovereignty of the PRC, but as a democratic unit, the voice of which the world and, of course, Peking, its sovereign power, will recognise.

The third point is nationality. The Committee expressed the view that others have expressed, that the idea of granting right of abode to the existing 3·28 million people in Hong Kong who are eligible for British dependent territory passports, let alone the other 2 million or so who will be eligible in coming years, is an impossibility. I paraphrase the Select Committee's words, but the conclusion is obvious. It is an impractical, implausible and therefore worthless undertaking.

No country can put its immigration policy into commission. That is what it would be. We can talk about it being an insurance policy, but with an insurance policy the person providing the cover has certain criteria upon which a claim is honoured. In this case, the right to make a claim would be delegated and put in commission. In effect, it would put not merely our policy of 27 years standing but our entire policy in these matters into commission.

It is a great pity that able minds and much money in Hong Kong have been mobilised behind an advertising and public relations campaign to go on hitting against the single narrow target of right of abode for all those passport holders in the United Kingdom. It will cause grief, be a misdirection of energy, and keep alive unfounded expectations and divert the vast abilities of the Hong Kong people from thinking about their own situation in a more realistic, international way.

As for categories, the Select Committee's report endorses the view, which is now the view of my right hon. and learned Friend and the Government, that there should be eligible categories for passports. My right hon. and learned Friend has said that a package of proposals will come forward. That will be difficult, just as everything is difficult in this matter. Of course, expectations in Hong Kong, even on that narrow point, are growing. There are two views in Hong Kong. One is that the numbers must be very large. I have heard quite responsible people suggest that anything less than 100,000 will be worse than nothing. Others have said that everything would be worse than nothing and that it is such a divisive concept that it would be wrong for any categorisation at all to take place, particularly those who say that it is an all-or-nothing argument—either a right of abode for everybody or nothing.

Perhaps I am too frank, but the divisions are there already. Perhaps between 500,000 and 1 million people in Hong Kong already have passports. They can go anywhere they like. Many of them can already come here. To talk about it being divisive, to deny that perhaps not very highly salaried people doing absolutely vital work in law and order and administration should also have the reassurance of that passport—I accept the reassurance argument in this context—is a little unfair and crude, and does not recognise the importance of these matters.

Therefore, there are two voices in this. I believe that it is right to opt for categories, although there has been strong advice from some quarters that the whole thing should be dropped. This will be a difficult issue to bring forward, but I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary has approached it with his usual extreme care and subtlety.

At the end of paragraph 4.15, the Committee referred to longer-term assurances and said—I paraphrase—that the British Government should take a lead with our EEC partners and with other immigrant-receiving countries, such as Australia, Canada and the United States, in putting in place and seeking to establish the definite assurances that are needed in the years ahead. I believe that that is the right direction for the Government to take. As I said earlier, that is a very much better direction into which the energies of the people of Hong Kong can be diverted than is knocking their heads against the unavoidable and pointless objective of passports for everyone.

It has already been said by our EEC partners that they do not want to know about these things. As we look at this issue it is worth bearing in mind the Portuguese question. Of course, as the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) said, the numbers are quite different. I understand that the Portuguese are to give 100,000 full citizenships—not just passports—to the Chinese people in Macao, and that there has been talk of almost double that number.

The Portuguese example follows a different policy line from the one that we have adopted. Let us think for a moment about what it implies in Europe. Those people will become citizens of Portugal but in due course, when Portugal has fulfilled all its obligations and has become a full member of the European Community, those people will become citizens of the EEC. That will not happen

immediately elsewhere because there are questions about right of settlement and right of abode for people coming to this country. However, I imagine that it will apply immediately in the case of Portugal and that the people who take up that right will be free to go anywhere in Europe—and that they may well do so.

If we are honest with ourselves, we know—I expect that my right hon. and learned Friend knows this full well—that at the moment every EEC country is facing the most severe and frightening prospect of mass immigration of one sort or another—whether from the Maghreb or anywhere else. Anyone who thinks that the problems of other EEC countries are not ours in relation to these pressures from outside and to the enormous volume movements of world immigration and emigration—and vice versa, that our problems are not theirs—is living in another world.

My right hon. and learned Friend is right to have discussions on this with the rest of the European Community—I shall come to the wider world in a moment—so that future pressures can be met in an orderly way. Those pressures are coming—only an ostrich with its head underground could deny that fact—and we shall not be able to deal with them alone, any more than we can contemplate the ideas about passports alone.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Is it not a fact that the Portuguese have always granted rights of citizenship to those born in their colonies of Portuguese parents and that the British Nationality Act 1981 confirmed that that would continue to apply in Macao?

Mr. Howell: Yes, I believe that it is. That point simply emphasises the problem.

The Committee urged my right hon. and learned Friend to take the lead in this matter. I hope that he will consider what we said. Indeed, he has already given a response that sounded extremely positive on that.

My own view—this is not the view of the Committee which has stated its views in the report—is that other countries such as the United States, Australia and Canada and, as we have recently read, Singapore, which has announced a figure of 25,000, although I gather that larger numbers are now contemplated, should become involved in what is, in effect, an underwriting scheme. It is a scheme for keeping those people in Hong Kong, which is what we are concerned to do.

I hope that the offers and assurances can be taken up, and not only if catastrophic events overwhelm the territory. Although my right hon. and learned Friend referred to such circumstances when he spoke to the Committee, that is a fuzzy concept. In reality, there would not be one single morning on which there was an overwhelming catastrophe. There would be ugly and rising tensions and dangers with sudden large groups of people seeking to leave the colony. Of course, one does not want any of that to happen—it is unpleasant even to have to talk about it—but we must realise that there will be circumstances well short of a neatly defined "catastrophe"—whatever that means—in which enormous pressures will come upon us and for which some provision and pre-vision would be desirable.

On a narrower scale, the flexible package that my right hon. and learned Friend will use on behalf of the Government is a first pebble in that pool, as are the ideas of the Singapore Government and the proposals that we are now hearing from the United States Congress.

Mr. Ashdown: I do not want to take up too much of the time of the House. We are all listening with great care to the right hon. Gentleman's personal views on this issue, which I find encouraging. Those views are obviously what he referred to in the *Asian Wall Street Journal*. However, I hope that he will not be guilty of raising the hopes that he has accused others of raising in Hong Kong. To be more specific, is he referring to an international agreement giving a promissory note in the event of catastrophe? Is he referring to something which would generously allow the people of Hong Kong to be considered as refugees in the event of terrible occurrences in the future, in which case such a provision would do nothing to keep people in Hong Kong—or is he referring to a commitment to citizenship? If he is not to raise people's hopes falsely, I hope that he will be a little more specific.

Mr. Howell: There are real difficulties in setting out what one suggests other countries should come together on and examine and the things in which my right hon. and learned Friend should take the lead. I am seeking to address perhaps unsolicited advice to the people of Hong Kong and am saying, "Please cease aiming all your huge energies at the right of abode for everybody"—which, if I understand his intervention, the right hon. Gentleman seems to think they should still work for—"and divert it into examining ways of seeking international assurances." I have used my words very carefully—I shall not repeat them because they are on the record—about in what circumstances those assurances should be given.

There is interest in this problem all around the world. It is not confined to just this country, as my right hon. and learned Friend recognised in his earlier remarks. Whether we "take a lead" as the Select Committee suggested or not—and, in my view, we have in a sense taken a lead—there are many other things to be done. The Bill of Rights is to be put in place. My right hon. and learned Friend is moving vigorously on that. There is also the question——

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South) *rose*——

Mr. Howell: I am sorry, but I think that I must rush on because I have taken too much time already.

There is also the question of keeping the People's Liberation Army out of Hong Kong. The Select Committee warned about that, and I know that my right hon. and learned Friend has noted our words. There is also the question of the physical, long-standing, long-enduring construction of a mighty building which would be the Great British consulate-general, showing that Britain will remain interested in the territory for years and years ahead. It would be a physical manifestation of our interest. There is also the recommendation in our report that the issue of the boat people should be dealt with. I shall not elaborate on that difficult issue now. There is also the final interpretation of the law, which we suggest should be clarified, and there are proposals for the development of democracy.

Most of those aspects of our report were denounced in Hong Kong in the heat of the moment. Now is the time for cooler consideration. Of course, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) has

[Mr. Howell]

said, ultimately the interests and the future of Hong Kong depend on China. For all its unpredictability and for all the hideous upheavals of recent days and the past, China has stayed predictable throughout about Hong Kong. Even in the moments of blood, smoke and horror, we must remember that basic fact.

In eight years' time Hong Kong becomes a ward of China. We must make sure that it remains also a precious godchild of Britain, Europe and the whole free world. A secure future can surely be built on that basis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I remind the House that the 10-minute limit on speeches operates from 7 o'clock, and I appeal for the co-operation of hon. Members.

6.59 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): The current situation in Hong Kong has been described as a crisis of confidence. We can certainly understand why the people of Hong Kong have no confidence in the Government of the People's Republic of China after the recent atrocities in Peking and elsewhere, but they also have decreasing confidence in the British Government. Indeed, the feeling among many of them is that they are being betrayed. The first duty of the House, therefore, is to restore their confidence—especially when we consider their valuable contribution to the wellbeing of the people of Britain over many years.

We must consider the best way to restore that confidence. There have been suggestions from some quarters that the Joint Declaration should be torn up, but I believe that that would be unrealistic and undesirable. The track record of the Government of the People's Republic of China—despite what has been said about Tibet by the leader of the Democrats—has been generally a good one in terms of keeping to international agreements and treaties. The recent events in the People's Republic of China, horrific and deplorable though they have been, have not invalidated the Joint Declaration.

What can we do to ensure that the Joint Declaration is implemented, to achieve security for the people of Hong Kong and political, social and economic stability in Hong Kong? First, we can try to encourage the emergence of strong and democratic institutions, which I have advocated during visits to Hong Kong and in this House for many years—even before the signing of the Sino-British agreement. Unfortunately, successive British Governments have been guilty of dragging their feet on that issue and have been content to continue governing Hong Kong in the style of a colonial dictatorship.

I hope that the House will welcome the Select Committee's proposals for the Legislative Council—that 50 per cent. of the council should be directly elected by 1991 and 100 per cent. by 1995, and that the chief executive should be elected by universal suffrage as soon as possible. In the Select Committee I said that I should have preferred the latter election to take place at least six months before 1997. At least the Committee has gone some way towards meeting that point, although I accept the doubts of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) about whether an electoral college would be the best way to proceed.

At this point I part company with most other members of the Select Committee, because I believe that the second way to help to restore confidence and allay the fears of the Hong Kong people is to give the right of abode in this country to all British dependent territory citizens. I argued that point, too, in Committee, and I tabled an amendment which unfortunately was supported by only one other Member—my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh).

Bearing in mind what the right hon. Gentleman who chairs the Select Committee has said, is it not ironic that the Portuguese Government have granted the people of Macao a right of abode which in effect will give them the right not just to enter Portugal but to enter other European Community countries and to seek work in those countries, including the United Kingdom, yet the United Kingdom will exclude British passport holders in Hong Kong from that same and equal right?

It is also less than even handed on the part of the Government to have given special priority treatment to the Falkland Islanders, but to deny similar treatment to the people of Hong Kong. It is also worth bearing in mind that there are literally millions of people scattered throughout the globe who have the right of abode in this country, but who do not wish to exercise that right at present or in the immediate future. I can imagine, for example, the possible scenario in the event of a crisis in South Africa. It is estimated that 1 million white South Africans have the right of abode in this country. If a revolutionary situation emerged in South Africa, I am sure that the Government and Conservative Members would be bending over backwards to bring those people into this country. There would, probably, not be a whimper of protest from them and their supporters.

It is also indulging in scaremongering to conjure a vision of 3 million, 3½ or 4 million people from Hong Kong suddenly appearing on our doorstep. It is most unlikely, even in an Armageddon situation, that they would all want to come to the United Kingdom. Even the Government have hinted that, if the worst comes to the worst, they would try to initiate some international response. Obviously, by 1997 there will be the opportunity for members of the European Community, with a population of about 240 million, and other immigrant-receiving countries such as Canada, Australia and the United States of America, to offer a generous response. If, however, a large number of Hong Kong people came here, their entrepreneurial and other skills would be an added asset to the economic and social wellbeing of this country.

Unfortunately, the Foreign Secretary is not present in the Chamber. In a recent BBC television programme called, "Hong Kong—A Matter of Honour", when pressed by the interviewer, he seemed to indicate that part or—perhaps—the whole reason for not giving the right of abode to those people was that it would "exacerbate ethnic tensions". There are perhaps shades of Enoch Powell there. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House would deplore any discrimination on ethnic grounds. Certainly, British public opinion seems to be more progressive than British governmental opinion in that respect. An opinion poll in the same television programme, which has been confirmed by subsequent opinion polls in the quality press, showed that the majority of the British people would be in favour of granting the right of abode.

If the right of abode were granted, what would be the likely effect in Hong Kong? Some people have said that it would lead to depopulation or even mass exodus. In fact, there is a partial brain drain in Hong Kong already, because people do not have the right of abode in the United Kingdom. Many skilled people, such as the managerial classes, are going to countries such as Australia, Canada and the United States for a period so as to qualify for the right of abode in those countries. Therefore, Hong Kong, temporarily at least, is being deprived of skills. More of those skilled people would stay in Hong Kong if they had the insurance policy of the right of abode in this country.

What would be the effect on the Government of the People's Republic of China if the right of abode in the United Kingdom were given to the people of Hong Kong? The Secretary of State referred to the self-interest of the People's Republic of China regarding Hong Kong. I maintain that if we gave the right of abode to the people of Hong Kong it would act as a disincentive to the People's Republic of China to intervene in the internal affairs of Hong Kong. Currently, many people in Hong Kong have nowhere else to go, which might be a temptation to the People's Republic of China to intervene. Paradoxically, if people had the freedom to go elsewhere, China would be more likely to behave in a reasonable manner because the last thing that it wants is a mass exodus. If that happened, it would simply inherit a desert instead of a country with an economic future.

The right of abode would therefore be a disincentive to the People's Republic of China to intervene and to breach the Joint Declaration. It would also be a positive incentive to the people of Hong Kong to stay in Hong Kong, to build their future there and to have a stable, peaceful and fruitful relationship with the rest of China, with Britain and with the rest of the world.

7.10 pm

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): The Foreign Secretary, in his excellent and wise speech, said that the Joint Declaration of 1984 was a triumph of diplomacy. Yes, it was, but, in my right hon. and learned Friend's modest way, he did not speak of the great part that he played in that triumph. We should be grateful to him not only for his experience, but for the part that he played in negotiating the 1984 agreement. We should also be grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for his recent visit to Hong Kong. In the face of great difficulty, he resisted giving way to some demands that would have been extremely difficult to meet.

My right hon. and learned Friend said that it was important that we get deeds as well as words from China, which would be a clear message of assurance to the Hong Kong people, and that he hoped that that would happen as soon as possible. That is what we should aim to achieve. I know the tragedy of what happened in Tiananmen square—I know that square well, as I have visited it on many occasions. Over and above the tragedies that occurred, however, it is in the interests of Asia and in the interests of all of us that we get such an assurance from China as soon as possible.

Yes, the Joint Declaration of 1984, which is now seriously jeopardised, had international support and good will. All that was undermined by the happenings in Tiananmen square. I understand the deep anxiety felt by the Hong Kong citizens. I served there as a soldier at the outbreak of the 1939 war and I experienced the loyalty to the Crown given by its people. That loyalty was also expressed during the war and during the Falklands war. I appreciate the need for prompt action to restore confidence; otherwise the unique position of Hong Kong as a financial centre could be seriously harmed before 1997.

As the Foreign Secretary said, our problem now is to stop the exodus of essential personnel and the international community must also play its part. It is in our interests, in China's interests, and, in this independent, global world, in everyone's interest that we have international support. If we do, we will have a greater chance of keeping Hong Kong as a thriving financial centre, to the benefit not only of China but of the world. That is why I was glad that the Foreign Secretary underlined that that was one of the important questions that would be discussed at the summit meetings. That is the perfect opportunity for such a discussion and we are fortunate to have it.

I have visited China a number of times, but the visits I recall most are those that I made in 1979, 1987 and 1988. In 1987, I led an all-party delegation and I was fortunate enough to have the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) as a member of that delegation. I understood the strong feelings he expressed when he made a statement to the House about the Chinese Government. When I visited China in 1979, I thought the conditions were austere, but the hon. Member for Warley, East told me that I should have been there a few years before, when things were much worse and contact even more difficult.

What a difference it was when we visited in 1987. There was investment in industry, and new hotels were being erected. I visited Peking and Shanghai and, in comparison to 1979, China had almost doubled her standard of living. I also met members of the People's Liberation Army. I was fortunate enough to take my young grandson aged 14 as a travelling companion. I can vividly recall the great reception we were given and how the Chinese Minister for Education sat him down on a couch and said that he could give my grandson a bird's eye view of China in 15 minutes.

When I visited China in 1988, even more change was taking place. There had been great economic progress, but it was noticeable that the Government were encountering difficulties, because at the same time as expansion had taken place, inflation was also rising.

I am sure that President Nixon, in his excellent article in *The Sunday Times*, was right when he said that we must keep our presence in China behind the wall. I had to deal with Japan when it was controlled by a military power. Where there are extremists, it is important to try to support liberals and others. One must not lose contact with such regimes, but one must also realise that one is not dealing with the same type of regime as is found in Europe; one is dealing with an establishment, not a democratic regime. We are fortunate that President Bush is at the summit, as he understands China so well. He was a China hand. He is a moderate, and he will understand only too well some of the difficulties that we face.

Despite the difficulties and the drama of recent months, we must keep in contact with China. It is easy to get political applause by saying that the events of recent months were horrific. They certainly were, but a friend of mine, a distinguished China hand, told me that such things had happened in China in the past 30 years. He said that

[Sir Julian Ridsdale]

there had been four or five such incidents in the past, but that modern communication had made democracy difficult for China. Modern communication has brought such events home. Therefore, we must ensure that we have the confidence to overcome the difficulties.

What a difference it is for me to consider Asia today, with the Pacific rim producing 40 per cent. of the world's gross national product, compared with the Asia of 50 years ago when I visited Hong Kong for the first time. I knew then that war was ahead of us and that, for Asia, disaster lay ahead. We have overcome those difficulties and the difficulties that we face now are much easier than those of the past.

I hope that we shall try to speed contacts with the Chinese Government, who are by no means all extremists. If we can do that, we shall achieve what my hon. and right hon. and learned Friend advocated. He is right to say that it is important that we get deeds as well as words from China, and that a clear message of assurance is given to the Hong Kong people as soon as possible. I hope that that happens, as it will be in the interests of China, Hong Kong, this nation and the world.

7.19 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): During the past few weeks the Foreign Secretary has been under attack over his handling of Hong Kong. It is not easy, at any time, to be Foreign Secretary, but he has conducted this difficult task with immense skill, patience and courage.

In the short time that I have I shall concentrate on our responsibilities which are clearly to maintain the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong up to and beyond 1997. When discussing this with the People's Republic of China, we are entitled to remind those people that when we entered into the 1984 agreement it related to them as well as to the people of Hong Kong.

When the British Government say to the Chinese Government, "We need to take these actions to retain that prosperity and stability" they must be prepared to listen to us because we all know that Hong Kong is immensely fragile and has always been so. Its confidence can dissipate very quickly. I well remember when there was a near-mutiny in the police forces in Hong Kong in October 1977. It was a very difficult situation and the quite exceptional governor at the time, the then Sir Murray MacLehose, who now sits in another place, argued strongly for a partial amnesty to be given to a large number of people who had all the appearance of being guilty. I was extremely dubious about his proposal and took a lot of persuading, but he was right. The partial amnesty restored confidence in Hong Kong and taught me a major lesson: we cannot apply to Hong Kong some of the standards of fairness and equity that we would normally apply to the governance of the United Kingdom.

How we restore confidence and our handling of the Select Committee report will be crucial. The Select Committee rightly said that the Government must exercise discretionary power to give some people right of entry into the United Kingdom as a confidence-building measure so that they will continue to contribute to the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong. I agree with the Chairman of the Select Committee that it will be immensely difficult to exercise that judgment. I do not like the expression "categorisation". How we exercise that discretion will be extremely difficult to justify to the House and Hong Kong. Frankly, it can be done only by the governor, who holds the necessary powers. He can directly advise the British Government and, through them, the Foreign Secretary and the Home Secretary. The governor must be given considerable discretionary power and, if necessary, we shall have to legislate for this.

The pace at which we make those discretionary judgments will depend on the most critical factor of all: the response of Peking. Perhaps we have not had enough discussion of the central importance of China in the restoration of confidence in Hong Kong. A few well-judged sentences, phrases and actions from Peking over the next few months could contribute more to the restoration of confidence than anything we do, even—begging his pardon—granting the right of abode of which the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) spoke.

We must be careful about using words such as "shabby" and "grubby" in this context. These are very difficult issues and, in my experience, the more politicians talk about morality, the more they lose touch with reality. We face very hard choices. We may have to be far more generous in giving Hong Kong citizens the right of entry over the next few years than any of us realises. We should not take too rigid a stance. If the position were to deteriorate considerably in China, we would have to be more generous and maintain the confidence of many more people in Hong Kong than we shall over the next few months.

I openly admit that I have no greater wisdom than any other hon. Member on this issue, but I believe that China will not revert to the cultural revolution. I do not believe that the Chinese Government will decide to forgo the substantial reforms that flowed from the third plenum in 1978. Modernisation of the economy will still be a major thrust of Chinese policy.

We should also remind ourselves that the third plenum made another decision: to give priority to economic modernisation and political stability. When we criticise Deng Xiaoping we should remember that, in his experience, students were not always the fount of all wisdom in China. There is an intense fear of instability in China.

That is no excuse for the massacre, which was almost beyond words to describe. The western world, Asia and, far more importantly, the people of China will not forget what happened in Tiananmen square. However, because what happened was wrong, it does not necessarily follow that a sequel of events in China will turn back the clock on the economic reforms.

It has always been clear that, unlike the leadership of the Soviet Union, the Chinese leadership is not aiming for serious glasnost or democratic reform, which I regret because I believe that it should. Violence, and the acceptability of violent behaviour, in China is not new. What the Chinese have been doing in Tibet over the past few years and months is little short of appalling in terms of human rights. Their support for Pol Pot in Cambodia was equally outrageous. We knew that when we negotiated the agreement in 1984. We took a judgment and hoped that the economic advantages of maintaining Hong Kong would be sufficient to justify it, but they may not be. If that is not so, the House will have to respond, as it responded to Uganda. We could not predict what was going to happen and, faced with General Amin, there was a

humanitarian necessity for us to respond. That may be the case with China, although I wish that there was less talk of Armageddon and an horrendous future, which could prove to be a self-fulfilling prophecy, and a little more cautious belief that the changes that started in China in 1978 will not be reversed and that Hong Kong is an essential part of maintaining that economic modernisation.

Apart from his far too limited view about how we should use the flexibility of right of entry, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) spoke many wise words with which I agree—particularly his point about patience. We shall return to the issue of Hong Kong many times in the next eight years, and perhaps quite a few times in the next year, when the situation will be fraught. All that I beg of the House is to be confident in the Foreign Secretary's capacity to handle this matter. There will be a difficult judgment to make on the trade mission. I hope the Foreign Secretary meets his Chinese counterpart as soon as is humanly possible, certainly at the United Nations in September and, arguably, before.

We must weigh carefully the issue of how to handle economic and trade matters. The Government are right not to have applied economic sanctions to China, and to have followed the rest of the world and the United States in holding off from doing so. At the economic summit, the fact that we have not applied sanctions can be used to explain to China that we shall see how it responds to Hong Kong as a litmus test for whether it will continue with economic modernisation and whether the world will help in its economic modernisation.

If we could obtain an expression of good will that, in the event of an Armageddon, there would be a world response, all well and good. I say to the Chairman of the Select Committee that it will be almost impossible to convince other Governments to make a commitment to accept the residents of other countries in advance of the holocaust. The most that we shall receive is a general expression of solidarity. The Chairman of the Select Committee is right to say that we shall see these forced migrations in many parts of the world for many different reasons and will have to learn how to respond to them internationally.

Confidence in Hong Kong is a fundamental issue. We can help to achieve this. It is not a matter of money. People in the public health service, education, social services, the transportation system, and the management of the stock exchange and commodity markets are all crucial to the economic prosperity and the social stability of Hong Kong. If it helps them to retain their jobs until 1997 and beyond, this country must be generous and give them that confidence.

7.29 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): Before I come to the main theme of our debate, I want to say a word about the boat people in Hong Kong. This is a painful and intractable problem, but, speaking for myself, I think that we must draw the line against forcible repatriation. We cannot accept that. Older Members will recall the forcible repatriation of the Cossacks and the Cherniks. No one would suggest that someone escaping across the Berlin wall should be sent back. At one human rights conference after another, our representatives speak of the right of emigration. If the newspapers are to be believed, we are proposing to give a per capita grant to Vietnam for every Vietnamese repatriated. We had much better spend the money getting them decent accommodation in Hong Kong or elsewhere until a more sensible solution to the problem can be found.

The growth of business ties with China, the fact that for many years it appeared to be almost an ally against Brezhnev's imperialism, and the spread of tourism, all fostered the illusion that the Chinese dragon had become the sleeping beauty—but it was always an illusion. I am probably the last British officer who served on Chiang Kai Shek's staff. I have no illusions about the brutality of his regime at times, and the Maoist-Communist revolution was more bloodstained even than the Leninist-Stalinist one. We should not be too surprised at what has happened. I was a little surprised that my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said that he was stunned by what had happened. Perhaps he should have had a slightly less naive view of the situation.

There is undoubtedly widespread discontent in China. It manifested itself first in Tibet. It arose not only in Peking and Shanghai—it was also to be seen in many of the provincial towns. This was no little local difficulty. That much is made clear by the official propaganda which denounces the counter-revolutionary plot and, rather than trying to play down what has happened, tends, if anything, to build it up.

The regime was clearly scared, because there appears to have been a moment of fatal hesitation when it did not react. Had it reacted more quickly there might have been less bloodshed. But the Chinese Government were not sure what to do. Were there divisions in the party and in the army? In a curious way I was reminded of General de Gaulle flying to Baden when I heard that Deng Xiaoping had flown to Wuhan to see the generals and recall the veterans of the long march. Perhaps order has been restored—if so, it is under a fairly elderly and old-fashioned leadership.

I shall not attempt to prophesy that China will return to warlordism, but the country has a history of instability, not just in the old days but under the Communist regime —under Mao, Lin Xiao Xhi and all the others. What has caused this instability? I suppose it is the difficulty of reconciling economic progress and political stability. That has been exacerbated by external influences—by business connections and by students going abroad, but perhaps more importantly by the influence of Taiwan. I believe that there were more than 300,000 Taiwanese visitors to the mainland last year. Perhaps above all, there has been the influence of Hong Kong, with its free press and vocal political views.

When it comes to the crunch between promoting prosperity or retaining political power for the party, we have seen that the regime opts for retaining political power, even at some damage to the chances of prosperity. This is awkward for my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and for all of us, because the basic calculation on which the Anglo-Chinese arrangement was made was that it was manifestly in China's interest that Hong Kong should continue as a prosperous capitalist centre and that "one country, two systems" was obviously what the future of China required. However, when a regime opts in favour of retaining political power at the expense of promoting prosperity, it is no wonder the people in Hong Kong are anxious.

[Mr. Julian Amery]

What can we do? Looking back, I sometimes wonder if we were right—I say "looking back" because I did not think this at the time—to surrender sovereignty as completely as we did. Of course, we could not have defended Hong Kong against attack, or even siege, but there might have been a Rubicon that Peking would have hesitated to cross.

I shall advance three suggestions of what we might do. They fit in well with what my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary said, although perhaps I put them a little more brutally. We want an autonomous regime in Hong Kong of a kind which could continue after 1997. It must be equipped with its own security force, including perhaps a gendarmerie. Perhaps Hong Kong could even afford to employ some Gurkhas. The force should be of sufficient strength that any attempt to subvert Hong Kong from the inside, or to advance against it from the outside, would be visible to the whole world. There must be no Chinese army garrison inside Hong Kong, at any rate until the 50-year period is over. Beyond that, it is worth considering the interests of other countries in Hong Kong. The Germans, the Japanese and not least the Americans all have massive investments there. Could we not persuade them to underwrite the basic agreement that we have concluded with the Chinese Government? We hope, too —the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said that there is reason to hope this—that the Chinese will return to the good sense that led them to make the agreement originally.

If we fail, we shall face the problem of the right of abode much more clearly than we do today. Much has been said about it. I hope that I shall not be thought wet or lacking in determination if I do not pronounce on it today. We have time. I should like to see how matters develop and what the Chinese Government do to restore confidence in Hong Kong. Only yesterday they tried to give reassurances, at the same time saying that Hong Kong must be careful not to become a nurse to anti-Communist propaganda. That was not reassuring.

Let us see how the situation develops. The problem is with us for a long time to come. It will return to the House of Commons and I hope that the Government will bring it back to the House when we meet again in the new Session after November.

7.38 pm

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): I believe that we have a strong moral obligation to the people of Hong Kong. I think that every hon. Member realises that, but many are wriggling and trying to avoid facing up to it by making proposals which they think the people of Hong Kong should accept as a basis for future confidence in the behaviour of the Chinese People's Republic. It is very easy to lecture people in Hong Kong about how confident they should be, but it is revealing when we see the Foreign Secretary admitting on television that if he lived with his family in Hong Kong, he would be looking for an insurance policy.

Conservative Members who are so eager to suggest to the people of Hong Kong that they should have confidence should ask themselves how they react when they are asked to have confidence in the new regime in the Soviet Union and its policy of disarmament. Is there a ready acceptance of the new regime, confidence in it and attention to its words? Of course there is not. All we get is the cry of caution—nothing can be done until everything has been proved and every t crossed and every i dotted. Only then will they have confidence. However, the people of Hong Kong should have confidence in the face of what they saw on their televisions a month ago.

I base my case on morality. Ten minutes ago, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), who has now left the Chamber, told us that when he hears politicians speak of morality, he thinks that they are departing from reality. When I hear people saying that we must face up to the reality of the situation, I feel that they are departing from morality, and morality is an extremely important part of a politician's make-up.

The people of Hong Kong must have a real basis for confidence. What better way to find out what they require than to ask them and to listen to what they say? Is there any doubt in anyone's mind about what would build the confidence of the people of Hong Kong? It is an extension of the right of abode in this country if they need it. I strongly support that. I advocate that it should be extended to them.

I know that that is contrary to my party's policy, but I believe that morally that is what should be done, and I will not justify it on the basis that perhaps only a few of them will come, so we need not worry about it. We have a moral responsibility, it should be faced up to and we should accept that we may have to meet it in full. If we have to do that, we shall have to ask the British people to make tremendous sacrifices. Are we so afraid of the morality of the British people that we cannot put that to them?

I represent a constituency in the north-west of England. What gives me most pride in that is something that I used as the theme of my maiden speech. It was the tremendous moral conduct of the textile workers in that area during the American civil war, when they refused to touch or work with the cotton brought here from the southern states, because they were against slavery. Because of their principles about what was happening in a country an ocean away, their children went hungry. Their houses were taken from them, but they did not flinch from that moral stance. I look back on that with the utmost pride.

I should like to think that, in the future, when people look back on this episode in history, they will not see that we tried to dodge our moral responsibility by saying, "Well, I am not sure that we have moral responsibilities," as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said. I was astounded by that. I would have thought that he, of all people, would accept this moral responsibility. If we do not face up to it, this will be a black chapter in our history, and the people who come after us will look back and say that we did a dishonourable act.

7.44 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): This country has a long and honourable record of providing a haven to those who are persecuted, subjugated or in other ways intimidated or discriminated against for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. That is entirely proper, for such persecution or discrimination forms the kernel of the reasons for granting refugee status.

Three groups of such refugees can be instanced quite easily and serve to illustrate our record of compassion. The

first group was the Huguenots, who fled Europe three centuries ago to escape religious persecution, the second the Jews who came from eastern Europe to escape racist and religious persecution. In recent years, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said, came the third group—the Asians from East Africa who came here when those countries were Africanising their economies. Interestingly, those groups have generally prospered and made a considerable contribution to the country that gave them sanctuary.

Recently, we have played a large part in settling a substantial number of Vietnamese boat people. However, the people of Hong Kong do not qualify as political refugees, because they are not persecuted, subjugated or discriminated against. I do not believe that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State could grant right of entry or abode to the 3·25 million Hong Kong British citizens, either on the basis of political asylum, or under the discretion of the Home Secretary. Without doubt, he would be acting ultra vires.

Those of us who unequivocally supported the Joint Declaration in 1984 as a pragmatic, realistic and even elegant solution to the problem of how to secure the safety of the Hong Kong people beyond 1997 were encouraged in our support by the open door policy then being followed by China and by its new-found enthusiasm for strengthening its relationships with the rest of the world. We prayed that there would be no return to the madnesses of the cultural revolution, which would damage confidence in Hong Kong. In 1986, a number of my hon. Friends and I expressed concern at the creation of the British national (overseas) status, but we voted for it and kept our fingers crossed that China would maintain its progress towards modernisation and improving international relationships.

Earlier this year, before the flowering of the pro-democracy movement in China, reports of diminishing confidence in the Joint Declaration in Hong Kong reached us. However, we were inclined to dismiss such reports as a sign of Hong Kong volatility. Now, after the ghastly events of 3 and 4 June, confidence in Hong Kong is shattered and the demands for right of abode have risen to a crescendo. To grant such right of abode to all those who might claim it would, as I said earlier, be ultra vires.

What can we do to restore confidence? I am much attracted by the search of my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) for an international solution, with assurance given in advance by a number of nations. As my right hon. Friend said, it might be necessary for those international assurances to be honoured in circumstances well short of the Armageddon scenario, and perhaps before 1 July 1997, if events in China become so alarming that confidence in the Joint Declaration breaks down completely. In any case, if the agreement breaks down beyond 1997, it is most unlikely that the People's Republic of China will allow the Hong Kong people to leave, and a new and terrifying armada of small boats will take to the seas with a new boat people.

If such an eventuality came to pass, so that that international assurance had to be honoured, it is without doubt that Britain would need to give a substantial lead, taking a large proportion of those who wished to leave. Should we regard this with fear, or should we welcome the prospect of an influx of skilful and hard-working people who might help to bridge the shortage of modern skills that confronts industry, particularly when our pool of young and entrant labour diminishes as dramatically as it will do? Perhaps we should encourage a greater number of Hong Kong people to bring their skills and energies to this country, not as refugees from an Armageddon situation but through an orderly influx over a period of time.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford made clear in his statesmanlike and persuasive speech, if we wait for Armageddon, the skilled and the entrepreneurial will have long since left Hong Kong and gone to the States, Canada, Australia or almost anywhere but the United Kingdom. We will need to offer entry under circumstances well short of catastrophe in return for a commitment to stay in Hong Kong until 1997 or until such time as international opinion believes that circumstances in China have deteriorated to the point where international agreements and assurances are triggered.

It may be necessary to change the present law to enable us to give such an assurance to the Hong Kong people. So be it; that will be the price of maintaining our international integrity. As others wiser than I have said, there is no doubt that the international community looks to us for a lead in the matter of Hong Kong, and we must not disappoint them.

7.50 pm

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): I was not in the House during the period leading up to and following the signing of the joint agreement with China, but I have taken the trouble to read extensively the debates and statements of the past 10 years. The picture that appeared was of the Government and the Opposition engaged in an orgy of self-congratulation; complacency abounded; the best of all possible solutions had been found. That is the message that strikes the reader of the records.

While it was acknowledged that the people of Hong Kong had no real choice but to accept the agreement concluded between the United Kingdom and China, the underlying theme was that a sophisticated and skilled United Kingdom team had obtained a good deal from a Chinese Government undergoing a profound change and a Chinese Communist party which no longer held the view that the only power worth exercising was that which came from the barrel of a gun. The skill of the United Kingdom, the deep changes within the ruling groups of China, and the text of the agreement were supposed, in themselves, to provide the foundation upon which the people of Hong Kong could place faith and reliance and maintain their sense of security and confidence in the future. What we have in fact, long before the fateful date of 1997, is a manifest failure of that agreement to maintain the Hong Kong people's sense of security and confidence and I am not surprised.

When the United Kingdom Government entered into negotiations, they made a monumental error of judgment about the nature and character of the Chinese Communist party. The Government suspended their critical faculties. The party that had created the human misery associated with the great leap forward, the blooming and then the cutting down of intellectuals, and the disaster of the cultural revolution, was accepted at face value when it claimed to have changed beyond recognition. Our Government and Opposition did not have the ability to look below the surface of the slogan, "Socialism with a Chinese face" to see that it represented only a disguise. What the Hong Kong people got from the British contribution to their fate was not a sophisticated analysis

[Mr. Jim Sillars]

of the Chinese Communist party and its workings and internal tensions, but an overdose of naivety. The British missed altogether the sort of evidence then available—which was quoted on page 146 of the minutes of evidence to the Select Committee on 20 April—from a group called "1997 Concerns."

Deng Xiaoping said in 1988:

"don't think that all of Hong Kong's affairs will be managed by Hong Kong, with the central government sitting idly by, and everything will be just fine. This is not acceptable. This type of attitude is not practical. . . . Can you imagine that there will be no obstructions or destructive forces in Hong Kong? I see no grounds for such self consolation."

Against that hard-headed dose of realpolitik, the Hong Kong people got naivety. The Foreign Secretary conjured up visions of passing on Hong Kong, like a precious Ming vase, to his Chinese team mates, as he described them.

The Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), said:

"Secondly, we should acknowledge the essence of the joint declaration that, from 1 July 1997, the People's Republic of China will be sovereign. Some hon. Members have said that that means that the Chinese Government can do anything they wish, but, as others have said, there are constraints on them. Our responsibility is to secure all the safeguards that we can, realise their limitations . . . and ensure that the Basic Law corresponds as much as possible with the spirit and letter of the joint declaration. After that it is a matter of trust.

In Beijing, the Government of the People's Republic of China described their signature of the joint declaration as a solemn commitment. I accept their sincerity—much more than I do that of the present British Government on a number of issues."—[*Official Report*, 15 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 754.]

Whatever one might say about the Thatcher Government, we have not yet had tanks and machine guns in the streets. The hon. Gentleman spoke those words in this Chamber only one year ago. None is so blind and deaf as he who does not wish to see or hear.

The truth is now emerging. Far from the cosy, cordial, open relationship where trust could be assumed, the Foreign Secretary said to the Select Committee on 14 June, at page 351 of the minutes of evidence:

"Everything one says about China, even in communications as open as they were before the atrocious events of a couple of weeks ago, is less than perfect; one is looking through a thousand glasses darkly."

Bearing in mind his previous statement about Hong Kong being like a precious Ming vase passed from hand to hand, we wonder at his choice of metaphor when he now tells us that it was never easy to see the other side to which we are handing the vase.

Let us consider the reality faced by the people of Hong Kong, over whom we have absolute power and for whom we have absolute responsibility now and until 1997. There is to be a transfer of territory. There is to be, uniquely, a transfer of people against their will. The territory and the people will be placed under Chinese sovereignty. The Chinese have promised not to derogate sovereignty, but to exercise it within an agreed framework of autonomy, which they will set up in consultation with the people of Hong Kong but with the final version resting with them as the sovereign power. Britain will issue people in Hong Kong with passports purporting to give them a form of British nationality, but without the benefits of a real national. In fact, those passports will offer no British protective cover in Hong Kong.

It is an unenforceable agreement. I stand open to correction, but I am certain that China's arrangement for the International Court of Justice to have jurisdiction over certain matters will not cover a breach of the agreement. Even if I am not correct in that, we all know that in recent cases, such as the United States against Nicaragua, and Iran against the United States on the issue of hostages, the ICJ had no remedies because it had no sanctions to apply. The much-vaunted Joint Declaration cannot be enforced by Britain, but it can be broken by the Chinese. People say that the Chinese keep their agreements. They might keep their external agreements but, as Tibet has shown, they do not keep their internal agreements when they have sovereignty.

The unenforceable agreement makes the Hong Kong Chinese people hostages to fortune. The Government and the Opposition have tenaciously clung to the idea that those people cannot have the right of abode in the United Kingdom. The Foreign Secretary has said that there are many problems. We accept that there are practical problems, but they are mostly about resource pressure on important social services. There is a practical way out of that practical problem. We should give the right of abode and simultaneoulsy establish a Hong Kong investment fund, similar in character and objectives to the Kuwaiti investment fund, which has grown enormously over the years, to create a capitial resource which would allow us, in the event of Armageddon, to go to the British people and international community and suggest that they take not just the people of Hong Kong but the help of the capital resources to overcome the practical problems that have been described. If we do not give the people of Hong Kong the right of abode, we shall do them a great evil.

8 pm

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): I am glad to see the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) in his place because I wish to refer to his claim that Parliament shrugs its shoulders at Hong Kong. That that is not true has been shown by this deeply serious debate in which hon. Members have shown much concern. It would be a great pity if the message that we do not care were to go to the people of Hong Kong. The message that we want to send to them is that we understand the anguish and trauma that they feel as a result of the massacre in Tiananmen square and we understand why they feel that way.

In return, I ask something of them. One sometimes sees reports of the questioning in Hong Kong of British motivation in relation to Hong Kong. It is alleged that the British Government, indeed the British Parliament, attach more importance to increasing British trade with China than to securing a good future for Hong Kong. Having had some experience as a Minister responsible for Hong Kong, and having followed the subject all my political career—indeed I was born there and have followed it all my life—I can confirm with great confidence that that allegation is untrue. The motivation of this Government, as of previous Governments, has been to secure the best possible future for Hong Kong. Not only is the allegation untrue; it is a deeply unwise allegation for anyone in Hong Kong to make. It results in a self-inflicted wound because it damages confidence inside Hong Kong.

If one were to consider the matter on a purely commercial basis—which I am not—and examined the difference in trade between Britain and China and Britain and Hong Kong, it would be seen that we sell to China less than half what we sell to Hong Kong. On a commercial

basis, it would be folly if the British Government sought to improve our trade with China at the expense of Hong Kong.

The restoration of confidence in Hong Kong is one of the most difficult questions that we have had to face in our overseas deliberations for some time. The issue of right of abode is extremely difficult. I have to say to my friends in Hong Kong that the right of abode on the basis that they are seeking it is unattainable. Parliament simply would not pass the legislation required to give them what they have been asking for. The British people would not understand if it were proposed by the Government. That is a sober analysis of the position as I see it. Almost nobody in the House believes that we could do it. Almost nobody outside the House believes that we should do it. That is not because of any hostility towards the people of Hong Kong, for whom the many of us who know them have a deep respect. They are energetic, creative and active people. It is simply because of the sensitivity in Britain about the problem of immigration, resulting from the events of the past 30 years or more, and because of the sheer numbers that are being discussed. I hope that the Government will succeed in finding a satisfactory flexible solution, but I fear it must fall far short of what the people of Hong Kong have been asking for.

A point that has been implicit in many speeches is that the disadvantage of the present system, which allows people to go from Hong Kong to Britain—although not many come—Australia, Canada and the United States is that to establish residence rights or citizenship they have to live in the country of their choice. That is bad for Hong Kong because it loses some of its best people. I hope that in seeking a flexible solution the Government will bear that in mind.

The Government are right to consult other countries of good will on assurances that could be given so that the people of Hong Kong might have the prospect of moving elsewhere in the event of what my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary described as a fundamental and overwhelming violation of the Joint Declaration.

Let me deal now with the prospects for faster direct elections in Hong Kong. I have said from the beginning that the second draft of the Basic Law was wrong in that respect. It was much too slow. The erection of a hurdle in the form of a referendum was a serious mistake.

It is important that the people of Hong Kong should arrive at a consensus on that question. The consensus of 24 May produced by OMELCO was an important step forward. I would go so far as to say that simply achieving another consensus may be more important than precisely what the consensus is, because it would be a powerful factor in the minds of the members of the Basic Law drafting committee.

On the question of the Vietnamese boat people, there should be an understanding that mandatory repatriation is right in the case of economic migrants. I am glad to say that the position is supported by the Save the Children Fund, so I am not speaking as somebody who has no compassion. We must obtain assurances from Vietnam that there will be no victimisation. Arrangements must exist which will give confidence that those assurances will be observed. However, I find the attitude of the United States Government and Congress on that matter incomprehensible and illogical. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary will make it clear to the Americans that that is the view of many hon. Members.

The United States says that the people now coming to Hong Kong are, for the most part, economic migrants and so do not qualify for resettlement in the United States. But it stops short at the point when it should go on. It should say that it is permissible and correct to repatriate them, as other economic migrants who have come without the benefit of visas are repatriated all over the world. They are certainly repatriated if they cross the Mexican border with the United States. Those economic migrants who come from Haiti in boats are sent straight back when they land on the coast of Florida. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will pursue that matter.

I am confident that by 1997 the future of Hong Kong will be that described in the Joint Declaration. We are familiar with the arguments about China's self-interest. China's economic self-interest is even stronger now than it was two or three months ago because it has severely damaged its economy by the events of Tiananmen square. Equally, the Taiwan factor is as strong as it has been for so many years.

I want to say something about an argument for history. It has never been true that freedom in Hong Kong has depended on democracy in China. There has been no democracy in China at any time that I can think of, certainly not in the past 148 years. The concept of "one country, two systems" is based on the assumption that China is likely to remain Communist. That is what it is all about. Therefore, we need not imagine that it is essential that China should be democratic for Hong Kong to have confidence in the future.

During all the turmoil of the past eighty years—the civil war, the arrival of Mao Tse-Tung at the border of Hong Kong in 1949 when no one knew whether he would stop or carry on into Hong Kong, the Korean war when Britain was at war with China, the United Nations trade embargo during the Korean war, the great leap forward, the cultural revolution and the Red Guards—during all that time China has not laid a finger on Hong Kong. In 1967, when the local Hong Kong Communists thought they could take the place over by a campaign of bombing and rioting, Peking positively discouraged them.

In all that time, Hong Kong was governed by "unequal" treaties—so described by China. Now that there is the "equal" treaty of 1984, why should we imagine that China is more likely to cut its own economic throat than it was during those 80 years?

We must remember that Hong Kong has come through times equally as alarming as the present, if not more so. If confidence is preserved, Hong Kong can come through this crisis, too. We have an obligation to do everything that we can to help preserve confidence. I ask the people of Hong Kong, as an act of will, to be confident. There is some will power involved, and it is for the people of Hong Kong to decide that they will keep their chins up.

The country that is best placed to help to restore confidence in Hong Kong is China itself, and it has much to gain from doing so. Recently, China reaffirmed the "one country, two system" concept. What we need now from China are practical steps and deeds, as well as more words of confidence.

8.10 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The events that occurred in Peking on 4 June overshadow our debate and hang like a black cloud over the people of Hong Kong, but while those events remain firmly in our minds, we must take the longer perspective and try to place them in the context of the Joint Declaration signed in 1984, the transfer of sovereignty in 1997, and the 50-year treaty which will then come into force.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) that there is a unique aspect to the Hong Kong problem. Unlike all other former British colonies, the goal of independence that we have faithfully pursued across the globe for the past 40 years, since 1947, is not available to the people of Hong Kong because the lease on the new territories expires in 1997 and because China has never recognised the unequal treaties under which Hong Kong island and Kowloon were ceded in the 1840s. The result of the 1984 negotiations and the debates in the House that followed them was not independence but a treaty which guaranteed virtually total autonomy to Hong Kong for a 50-year period on the basis of the "one country, two-systems" formula.

I do not agree with the statement of the right hon. Member for Yeovil that Parliament handed over the people of Hong Kong naked to the tyranny of a Communist country. That is not so at all, and such an assertion flies in the face of everything that we set out to achieve and, indeed, accomplished. Right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House agreed that we should maintain for the people of Hong Kong substantial and almost total autonomy under one of the most remarkable treaties ever signed. That treaty granted the continuation of a separate economic system in Hong Kong. Even more important, it secured the continuity of Hong Kong's laws, system of justice, and independent legislature, based on Hong Kong itself.

One of our major concerns must be to ensure that the autonomy embodied in the Joint Declaration is fully translated into the precise language of the Basic Law, which is still in draft form. Weeks before the events in Tiananmen square, I reached the conclusion—as, I suspect, did many other right hon. and hon. Members—that the present draft of the Basic Law is inadequate and needs to incorporate stronger guarantees against any possible Chinese intervention based on the legalities of the Basic Law. It also needs to enact a Bill of Rights.

Above all, the Basic Law must provide for Hong Kong's legislature to be directly elected before 1997. That is why we and the Select Committee reject in terms the doctrine of mirror imaging, whereby the Hong Kong Administration and the British Government pretended to make proposals about democracy in particular only in so far as they thought that those proposals coincided with the intentions of the Chinese Government. We called for the people of Hong Kong themselves to determine the nature, extent and timetable for introducing democracy before 1997.

The crucial additional question that the Select Committee faced, and which now confronts the House, is whether, after the events of 4 June, the Chinese Government can still be trusted. Will they renege on their commitments? Will they tear up the treaty? Will they impose their authoritarian rule on Hong Kong? My view still is that they will do none of those things. That view is not based on any optimistic appraisal of the character of China's present Government. It is suggested by the immense blow to China's interests that would be struck if they were to violate the Hong Kong treaty.

Hong Kong is immensely important to China's economy. It is like a powerful tugboat, pulling the great liner of continental China towards greater economic growth and prosperity. It would be madness for the Chinese Government to tear up an agreement that guarantees continuity of Hong Kong's prosperity and progress. Perhaps the ultimate guarantee for Hong Kong is that if China tore up the treaty it would put paid for ever to the Chinese Government's cherished hopes of ultimately seeing the reincorporation of Taiwan into China.

What if, despite all those considerations, a disaster occurred? I have wrestled with my conscience, as I am sure other right hon. and hon. Members have done with theirs, as to the extent of our obligation. There must have been many occasions in the past when we have launched a new nation into independence knowing very well that there could be no guarantee that after independence that nation would be safe either from internal tyranny or from external aggression, but on no previous occasion have we felt that our obligation to a former colony extended to offering a right of abode in Britain to all its inhabitants in the event of a disaster. Therefore, it is not reasonable to expect Britain to extend such a guarantee to Hong Kong now.

Any individual who is threatened or who has reason to fear persecution because of his political views should, of course, make use of our open-door policy. However, we have accepted that there is a difference between the granting of independence and the granting of autonomy, however strong we believe the treaty guaranteeing that autonomy to be. That is why the Select Committee called for Britain to take the lead in organising an international safety net if, after 1997, China tears up the 1984 treaty. For Britain alone to give such a guarantee would be unconvincing to Hong Kong and unacceptable to the bulk of our own people. If the burden can be shared with Canada, Australia, the United States and the European Community, it will provide a much broader base on which a refuge of last resort can be based. I hope that the Foreign Secretary will, as he has promised, enter into an early and serious dialogue with all our partners in helping to provide the safety underpinning that Hong Kong needs.

8.19 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): The events of 4 June in Peking were undoubtedly significant for the history of China, both internally and externally. The first and most obvious point to make is that they illustrated, graphically and horrifically, the concern felt by many outside observers about the disparity between the movement towards economic liberalisation and the lack of movement towards political liberalisation. It would be immodest of me to refer to comments that I made in a book that I wrote in 1984 called "All Change in Hong Kong", but I do not think that I was alone in recognising the dangers that China faced. What we are now discussing is the effect of what seemed to many an inevitable crisis, and what that effect will be on the people of Hong Kong.

Hon. Members are normally required, at the beginning of speeches, to declare any interest that they may have. I

suppose that my chairmanship of the British-Chinese parliamentary group could be construed as a political interest; in any event, for those of us who, like my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and many others in the House, have watched with interest the development of politics in China during the past few years, to see China knock itself off the pedestal on which we have placed it has been a cause of grave concern.

I refer not to the Chinese Government but to the Chinese people when I say that our succour and support are needed at this time. Whatever we may fear for the future of the people of Hong Kong, I feel that we should spare—in spades—a thought for that of the Chinese, living as they do under a Government who are prepared to resort to shooting their own unarmed citizens. The Chinese Government have lost not only their credibility throughout the world, but their credibility among their own people.

I allow myself only a minor jest when I recall that, over the past few years, I have had the pleasure of showing Mr. Hu Yaobang and Mr. Zhao Ziyang round this building and chairing meetings with them, only to find subsequently that they had been disgraced. Perhaps the House should invite Li Peng to pay us a visit: he might share their fate. There can be few people who are more unpopular in China at present.

Our debate has highlighted the difference between those with political responsibility—or the expectation of it—and those who have been willing to exercise their moral judgment without, perhaps, contemplating the effect of such a luxury on opinion in both Hong Kong and Peking. I implore hon. Members on both sides of the House to remember that, although the words we speak here are being spoken in a debating Chamber, they may have more of an impact on people living on the other side of the world than we are accustomed to expect of our speeches. Our criticisms of the Chinese Government should be objective; our actions—if there is any point in saying such a thing—should be designed to help the process of change in China, rather than to help ourselves to clear our consciences with breast-beating. That is of no use to the people of China who are suffering now.

Our message to the Chinese Government should perhaps be this: that they should understand that we understand that, on the one hand, overt external criticism is likely to be counter-productive, but, on the other hand, we appreciate their need for western technology. Perhaps the most useful action that the House can take is to allow them to contemplate how they will set the balance between what we say to them and what they need from us.

A number of hon. Members have mentioned the paramount need for China to ensure that Hong Kong remains prosperous and stable; the point does not need to be laboured. It is, however, the key to Hong Kong's future. The only certain way in which to undermine that stability and prosperity is to destroy Hong Kong's value to China: that was the purport of my intervention in the speech of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). Sadly, some people in Hong Kong seem to aim unerringly in that direction, and I do not believe that they serve the real interests of the people of Hong Kong.

China's role in Hong Kong's future is not a matter of debate; it is a matter of fact. The 1984 Joint Declaration was and remains the only basis on which Hong Kong has any prospect of maintaining its stability and prosperity. Words such as "obligation" and "honour" may be used, but 1997 has always been in prospect. If I move into a house with a finite lease, my options will be limited when that lease ends: I can only hope that the leaseholder can negotiate my continued occupancy with the freeholder. That is the role that the British Government have seen themselves trying to play, and the role that, so far, they have been able to play. If we dare to send a message to the people of Hong Kong, let it be that, if it is necessary to live with a giant, sticking pins through his ankle may not be the best way of reaching an accommodation with him.

Talk of renegotiating the Joint Declaration strikes me as unhelpful; whether we can improve the Basic Law through negotiation is an altogether different matter, but our probes must be constructed within the realistic bounds of China's bottom line—that is, the maintenance or re-establishment of sovereignty after 1997. Demanding of the Chinese that they do not station the People's Liberation Army in the territory must, in my view, seriously impinge on the sovereignty issue, and I find it hard to believe that they would be prepared to allow any such clause to be negotiated into any agreement.

It is fashionable in certain quarters in Hong Kong, and even in this country, to impugn or deride the integrity of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. That, I think, both insults the man and assaults an intelligent assessment of the situation, and those in Hong Kong who are leading the verbal attacks on my right hon. and learned Friend demean only themselves.

The 1989 scenario, as I have said, has always been there. June 1989 has created a climate of wholly understandable fear in Hong Kong. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker), however, made the shrewd and telling point that Hong Kong has never been dependent on—has never enjoyed the luxury of living in its dependency on—a democratic China. Deng Xiaoping is 84 years old, and there will undoubtedly be more change in China long before 1997.

The Chinese now face a double-generation gap, between the octogenarians on the one hand and the students on the other. Time is undoubtedly on the side of China's youth. In the long run, that will be good for both China and Hong Kong, but do not let us delude ourselves into believing that stability in Hong Kong is in any way dependent on the emergence of what we call a democratic regime in China. Extravagant gestures and statements are rarely good guides in foreign policy.

There is no such thing—in Hong Kong, China, Britain or anywhere else—as a cast-iron guarantee for the future. I have always believed that the main threat to Hong Kong's future stability and prosperity comes not from China or Britain but from some of its own people, who—as the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said in what was a shrewd and serious speech—seem to enjoy peddling the Armageddon scenario. I hope that the harbingers of doom in Hong Kong do not create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

8.29 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyl Tydfil and Rhymney): Throughout the Select Committee's inquiry we kept returning to a basic but fundamental question: what is the nature of our obligation towards the people of Hong Kong, given, as my right hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. Ted Rowlands]

Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) reminded the House in his speech, the unique position in which Hong Kong finds itself?

It was my privilege for a number of years to be a Minister with responsibility for our relationships with a number of dependent territories, though they did not include Hong Kong. During the years that I had that privilege, there was a choice for the dependent territories. Either they could choose to make progress towards independence at the pace that they decided for themselves or—the Falklands is a case in point—they had the right not to change. They demanded that right. In 1982, we fought a war on behalf of that right. The problem is that Hong Kong does not and cannot fit into those general characteristics. Self-determination cannot take place because of the curious leasehold relationship.

Given the existence of those unique characteristics, how do we fulfil our obligations towards the people of Hong Kong? I endorse the thrust of the policy, through the Joint Declaration and the draft Basic Law, to establish an autonomous Hong Kong region. Whenever one tries to devise an autonomous constitution, there are always grey areas of responsibility, sovereignty and division of power. In the case of Hong Kong and China, those grey areas were much larger, even before the terrible events of June. Now they are really large, particularly in relation to the changes that are required to the draft Basic Law.

I shall illustrate what is required by referring to one change that the Foreign Secretary mentioned. I am glad that he referred to it again today because he rather muffled what he said last week about article 157—that the interpretation of the Basic Law must be placed in the hands of a joint constitutional court, not in the hands of the Legislative Assembly of the People's Republic of China. That point had arisen even before the June massacre, but now it is a fundamental requirement in any further redrafting of the Basic Law.

The establishment of democratic institutions in Hong Kong must be an integral part of the autonomous character of Hong Kong after 1997. After all that has been achieved, will there be a residual obligation? I believe that there will. However, I do not believe that either the Select Committee or the Government are prepared fully to meet that obligation.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said that the present Government cannot bind future Governments over the thorny issue of immigration. There were sage nods when he said that, as though it were an absolute truth. However, when any Government sign a treaty, all future Governments are automatically bound by the terms of that treaty. This treaty is no different from any other treaty. It will bind future Governments, whether Labour or Conservative, to fulfil the obligations under the treaty. Those obligations do not come to an end in 1997. We shall be a party to the treaty after 1997.

The hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) referred to the relationship between the leaseholder and the freeholder. He implied that the British Government had been a broker between the leaseholder and the freeholder. That is not an accurate description of the arrangements that are being put in place. The British Government are a party to the whole deal. They are a party to the lease after 1997 just as much as they are a party to it up to 1997.

How does one fulfil any post-1997 obligation? If the British Government of the day consider that there has been a breach of the treaty or that there is a danger that the spirit and nature of the arrangements are being breached, they will be under an obligation to react in a number of ways. They will have to try to prevent any further breaches by making strenuous representations—diplomatic, political and international.

If the breaches continue, what ought the British Government to do then? A future British Government would be under a residual obligation, because they would be bound by a treaty signed by this Government to make arrangements to deal with the possible desire by a large number of people to leave Hong Kong. I do not support the notion of the right of automatic abode in this country at any time. If we give an automatic right of abode to the people of Hong Kong, that will not be an insurance policy, but I believe in an insurance policy of one kind—that if the treaty is breached, certain obligations will fall upon us, however unpalatable and inescapable they may be.

We must ask ourselves a simple question: does that right of abode mean that this country must just be kind, nice and enthusiastic about the people of Hong Kong and treat those who wish to leave Hong Kong as refugees? I do not believe that we should be fulfilling our obligations after 1997, however generous we were and whatever international efforts we made, if we dealt with them only as refugees. They will, of course, have all the characteristics of refugees and they will leave Hong Kong in a hurry at various times. Paragraph 4.16, which appeared in the draft report but which was eventually removed from it, said:

> "A particular option which we would like to see the British Government explore within the European Community is the possibility of granting to the BDTC population of Hong Kong full British citizenship in the event of a"

breach of the treaty.

We committed a future British Government to a fundamental obligation when we signed the Joint Declaration, however unpalatable that obligation may be. However successful this Foreign Secretary may be in obtaining the support of other Governments, we shall not fulfil our fundamental obligation to the people of Hong Kong if we do not go further than giving them refugee status.

8.38 pm

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I agree with a great many of the points made by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). Like him, I was a member of the Select Committee. Having spent most of May and June preparing the Select Committee report and interviewing witnesses, I was reminded time and again of the extent to which the Joint Declaration of 1984 was a remarkable document. That has been said by many people in the debate. I am sorry that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, because of his many duties, understandably was unable to hear the many glowing tributes to him on the achievement of the Joint Declaration of 1984.

It is a pity that when the Select Committee report was published its reception in the media was largely confined to

the core issue of the right of abode and seemed to miss the vitally important issues that we proposed in measures calculated to increase confidence in Hong Kong, such as the strengthening of the interpretation of the law, the recommendation to speed up the process towards full democracy and the election of the chief executive, the enactment of a Bill of Rights, the aspiration that we could persuade the People's Republic of China not to station troops on the soil of Hong Kong, and our recommendations for the Armageddon scenario. One Sunday paper put our recommendations on that on its front page, but it could have published it the previous week if the media had taken the trouble to read the Select Committee report.

It was inevitable that, given the strong feelings in Hong Kong, most of the media attention was given to the right of abode. Very strong feelings have been expressed about the report and about what the Government have said on the right of abode. We have been heavily criticised in Hong Kong because the Select Committee did not recommend that the right of abode be given to a total of more than 5 million people—as it could well be in 1997. The Select Committee was divided on the issue. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) referred to the fact that the Committee was divided seven to two. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney joined other members of the Committee in voting against giving the right of abode to all those people.

We have been told that that report was dishonourable. Let us consider what would happen if the House of Commons and the Government changed the law to give the right of abode to all current and potential holders of British dependent territory passports. We understand the background to the pleas that that should happen. We have heard the arguments about a sense of security, a fire escape or an insurance policy. We all know the argument, which I guess is true, that if the right of abode is given it would be unlikely to be taken up by large numbers of people. Although that is put to us both here and in Hong Kong, nothing can remove the basic fact that, although few people might take up that right of abode in the forseeable future, they might nevertheless do so in certain circumstances.

That brings me back to the Armageddon scenario, which has been extremely prominent in the debate. There is no question but that in a dire emergency the right of abode would be taken up. We have to ask ourselves what would happen if, in a crisis, huge numbers of Hong Kong people wanted to come here in a hurry. Frankly, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary has said, we could not accommodate them in huge numbers. My right hon. and learned Friend was right to say that it is unrealistic to suppose that we could. It is not realistic to envisage 5·5 million people wanting to come here. I do not believe that the transport facilities would allow that, but if we were confronted with even 1 million people, I do not believe that the United Kingdom could absorb them.

Sir Russell Johnston: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jopling: I shall not give way as I have only 10 minutes.

My guess is that in a cataclysmic situation after 1997, if our successors in the House of Commons were faced with that massive, unmanageable flow of people into the United Kingdom—if that unlikely situation should occur—they would be forced to put a stop to it. If we are asked to provide an insurance policy which would be called upon only in a time of extreme crisis, but which, as I have tried to explain, could not possibly be cashed, we have to ask ourselves whether it is not more honourable to say no now, rather than be forced to say no and renege on previous undertakings in the future. I believe that it is more honourable to say no now.

The world community now must concentrate on creating a contingency plan, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary suggested in his evidence to the Select Committee on 14 June when he said that

"it is . . . inescapable that the United Kingdom with its special responsibility for the territory would be the country to which they would look for treatment as refugees and we would have to try and discharge that responsibility with the help of others."

That is entirely right. The Select Committee supported my right hon. and learned Friend's undertakings on 14 June. Clearly we have a duty to take the lead in preparing a plan with the international community. I do not advise my right hon. and learned Friend to try to extract numbers from countries which he felt might be helpful. If he does, he will not be successful. Most countries which would be helpful in a crisis certainly would not be prepared to commit themselves to certain figures at this stage of negotiations. The failure to get figures would create more despondency and lack of confidence in Hong Kong. It is far better for my right hon. and learned Friend not to start talking numbers but to try to evolve a plan.

It surely must be more satisfactory for Hong Kong to have a worldwide solution of the problems of cataclysm rather than a purely British solution which could not be delivered. We must not forget that if we had given a right of abode, there would be no way in which we could get a plan out of anyone. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will proceed on those lines to try to get general agreement, realising that it is probably not practicable to be specific.

8.48 pm

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): There is an inextricable link between current events in China, historical events and future events. Today's problems need to be addressed against a background of the death, persecution and repression of the Chinese working class, students and peasants, and the worldwide condemnation of the bureaucracy in China. Clearly, words are cheap and action is necessary to support the democratic process in China and give sustenance and support to the people of Hong Kong who view those atrocities with extreme caution.

In the aftermath of the repression of working class students and peasants in China, we have seen the gloating of those anti-working-class elements in British and other societies, who say, "If this is Socialism, with tanks, guns, and flame throwers on the streets, it is little wonder that people are rising against it." We must explain the reasons why those events in China took place, and continue to take place. More important, we must differentiate between the Stalinist regimes of eastern Europe and China, which are labelled Socialist, and the reformist regimes in the West, which are also labelled Socialist. I believe that they are no more Socialist than the British Government, with their

[Mr. Terry Fields]

lack of democracy and accountability of officials and elected representatives. We need a political and economic analysis.

I shall go on a journey into the past and look into the position in Russia and China. In 1949, the Chinese picked up the Stalinist model, which had been prevalent for almost 30 years in Russia, and adapted it for their own devices, with all the deformities that occurred under Stalin after the 1920-24 period. Although we applaud the kicking out of capitalism and landlordism in China, we completely condemn the lack of democracy and proper freedom for millions of people in China, just as we condemn it in the Russian states.

I do not expect the Foreign Secretary to accept a Socialist analysis. I certainly do not accept his analysis. The reforms that the right hon. and learned Gentleman welcomed and that, unfortunately, my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) welcomed are the direct result of what has happened in the past few weeks and months in China. The reforms have been responsible for raising the expectations of Chinese workers, for the inability of the deformed workers' state to come through with the goods and for the repression that has followed.

Much of the recent economic growth in China was stimulated by the growth of agriculture and industry in the rural sector. Under central planning, huge sectors of heavy industry have been built up. China is now the world's fifth largest industrial producer, but the countryside still exerts enormous pressure on society. At the heart of Deng's new policies was a dramatic shift towards production in the rural areas. This marked a brief break from the overriding emphasis on industrial accumulation, the track followed by the rural bureaucracy in China since the revolution.

We must be honest—there was a recovery between 1977 and 1985 in China. National income per capita grew at an average rate of 16·89 per cent. per year, compared with 3·22 per cent. between 1966 and 1976. However, increasingly expensive inputs of investment, labour, energy and raw materials failed to produce a commensurate increase in manufactured goods, especially of the more modern and technological variety. As more complex technology demands greater skill and more initiative and co-ordination from the work force, so the problem becomes much more acute. In this sense, China's economic experience was mirroring and catching up with what was happening in the Soviet Union. Deng and his cohorts had no confidence in the working class. The conscious involvement of workers in running society—the key to running a planned economy—would threaten the power and privileges and prestige of the ruling class, so workers were not involved in central planning.

The leadership chose the easy option—a turn towards the countryside, with policies aimed at stimulating farm production, rural industry and services. This produced a phenomenal spurt of growth in the economy, but it was only one-sided. Gains in the countryside have already rebounded on the cities. During that period, the leadership bowed to the enormous pressure for change that had fermented in the rural sector. It allowed the rapid dissolution of the collective farms, to be replaced by the household responsibility system, under which households contracted to sell a quota of produce to the state. At the same time, state prices for produce were raised significantly. Those measures stimulated big, all-round increases in output.

In the second phase, beginning in 1985, the Government went even further. Households were granted 15-year leases on the land, with the right to reassign occupancy. The long-standing state monopoly on the purchase of grain and other major farm products was abolished. Although the state retains the right to buy quotas under contracts, there is largely a free market in agricultural produce.

Encouraged by incentives, there were dramatic increases in output, but there were contradictions. Increased agricultural output was accompanied by a massive growth in rural industry. "Specialised households" involving 70 million workers provide employment for a section of the redundant rural labour force and account for about 40 per cent. of the rural sector's gross value output.

Until 1986, the new policies appeared to be a great success. Western commentators, gladdened by Deng's turn to capitalist methods and excited by the prospect of China's boundless market, could not praise China enough. But things have turned sour. A glance beneath the surface of the market reforms shows why. According to Deng,

"there are no fundamental contradictions between a socialist system and a market economy."

That comment about Socialism and capitalism being linked has been made a little closer to home. However, markets are essentially unplanned—unlike the planned economies of China and of Russia—attracting resources to the most profitable sectors regardless of the economy's overall needs and undermining the effectiveness of central planning. There is a contradiction between the direction that Deng and his bureaucrats are taking and the basis of a workers' state.

Grain production, for instance, has declined alarmingly after reaching record levels in 1984. The effectiveness of price incentives has been undermined, partly by the increased cost of inputs, partly by more attractive prices for other crops. In some areas, local councils have insufficient cash to pay for the state's quota of grain, so peasants have stopped growing crops. The state has been forced to import increasing quantities of grain, spending $1·5 billion of valuable foreign currency on 16 million tonnes of grain in 1988. There are contradictions in a so-called planned economy venturing into a capitalist system.

Recently, the Government introduced preferential allocations for farmers—in reality, a form of rationing, which contradicts the reliance on market methods. Naturally, farmers in those areas have responded by producing the crops for which they get the highest prices—in tune with a capitalist economy. That has meant the production of more cotton and tobacco and less grain and other foods. Shortages and higher prices have helped to accelerate the general inflationary trend, which is fastest in the cities, where the incomes of workers have not risen as fast as in the countryside. A hotch-potch of contradictory economic and political policies is prevailing in China. The workers reacted to that.

Last year, according to official figures, 35 per cent. of Chinese cities and towns suffered a cut in living standards. Inflation and unemployment rates have risen and, as a consequence, workers have moved into action. In the struggles in China, workers have accompanied students

and peasants and reacted against the reforms that have taken place. The bureaucracy finds itself isolated and incapable of dealing with the problems that affect the people of China.

The Chinese workers' demands were exemplified by students in Tienanmen square. They want democracy. Instead of claims that it is a move to capitalism, we must listen to the brave students who went to their death singing the "Internationale". The events over the next period have already predicted by strong calls in relation to international capitalism, and a similar warning——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman has exceeded his time.

Mr. Fields: I will sit down after this sentence, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We warned the Government against short-term expediency. Wider and larger perspectives are necessary. Ultimately, the result of the struggles in China will be mirrored in Hong Kong, Britain and around the world. Workers of the world will unite, and the days of this and reactionary imperialist Governments around the world will be numbered.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time limit on the length of speeches is about to lapse. I hope that hon. Members will still make brief speeches and allow as many other hon. Members as possible to participate in the debate.

8.59 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): The speech by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) reminded me of Swinburne's lines

"Even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea."

I hope that the hon. Gentleman is satisfied with the conclusions that he reached.

There is a strange phenomenon in Hong Kong. The richest and smartest people live in flats on the Peak, but for much of the year a cloud settles round that Peak, completely destroying visibility. Perhaps when the House next debates the vexed question of Hong Kong and its relations with China hon. Members will have escaped from the dark cloud that was created by the appalling atrocities in Peking and will see the relationship in an entirely different and, I hope, rather better way.

In recent weeks, I have been astonished by comments in the media. One has had to check one's own moorings. It was as though Hong Kong had been towed 100 miles into the South China sea and had broken all its traditional links with the Chinese mainland. The columnists and critics who often appear on my right have suddenly appeared on my left, in shrill and emotional terms reminding my colleagues and me of our moral obligations to the people of Hong Kong in a way that I found bizarre.

I will give some examples. It is outrageous to suggest that any British Cabinet would say to the people of Hong Kong, "If you run into real trouble, millions of you can seek refuge in the United Kingdom, but we say that only to give you confidence; for heaven's sake, do not ever try to do so." No Cabinet or political party would react in that way, and I cannot believe that any legislation framed from such decisions would get through the House of Commons.

Believe it or not, one or two papers suggested that the well-educated people of Hong Kong might move in their thousands or millions to an island off Scotland, to be self-contained and to create wealth for themselves and the United Kingdom. It would have to be an Islay or an Alcatraz. We would have to stop them by force from coming to London and other big cities to improve their business opportunities.

A weird letter from some old fool was given prominence in the *Spectator* last week. It suggested that the Gurkha garrison in Hong Kong should be dramatically increased so that Hong Kong's defences could be made secure. That brought back memories for me. I served as a soldier in Kowloon in the mid-1960s. We endlessly discussed whether after we had mined some passes and blown up some tunnels we could keep the Chinese army out for 12 or 24 hours. At the latest count, the Chinese People's Liberation Army has 2·3 million personnel, and the combined forces of China have roughly 3·2 million. The reality is that Hong Kong is totally indefensible in military terms. In about 12 hours, if they wish, the Chinese could change the sovereignty of the colony. Britain has very few cards to play, and most of them are rather low.

I remember at that time a water shortage in Hong Kong, when the taps were on for only four hours every fourth day. It certainly gave a new importance to aftershave. It also reminded us of how totally dependent the geography and the physical being of Hong Kong is on mainland China because negotiations were then taking place so that we might be allowed a little more water from China's vast reservoirs.

I then moved to Hong Kong island and worked as a member of the Hong Kong Government for 18 months. I paid Hong Kong income tax, which I assure my hon. Friends was most beneficial to me. It was explained to me that Hong Kong would not be like Gibraltar—a permanent colony—and that it would not become independent like Kenya or the other east African colonies but that its future lay in reverting to the Chinese mainland in 1997. That concept was entirely accepted by the people of Hong Kong at that time. Indeed, one reason why they paid so little income tax was that Britain had certain obligations, especially defence obligations, and Hong Kong was on a special route. I remember Reggie Maudling, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, arguing in Government House with the governor, Sir David Trench, for whom I was working, about Hong Kong's financial support for our defence forces. I suspect that that issue still rumbles on in the cloisters of Whitehall. I see my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary nodding his head.

I was told that the Chinese were after Taiwan above all; that they would put up with a lot in relation to Hong Kong, but that, ultimately, Macao and Hong Kong led to Taiwan. Taiwan is linked with the civil war and has far more significance and historical importance for them.

If I am asked what Britain can do at this stage, I have to say, "Do nothing in particular, but do it well." I take an optimistic view about China. Experts say that every six years since the world war the politics of China have shifted dramatically one way or the other. Therefore, it does not seem far-fetched to expect another shift to occur during the next eight years. China's leadership has gone well beyond the biblical barrier of three score years and ten. It is a leadership despised by its own people and disliked by almost every other country.

In this day and age the rulers in Peking must acknowledge the power of radio and television. The BBC World Service has said that it has an enormous audience

[Mr. Cyril D. Townsend]

throughout China. That audience understands that elections are taking place in Poland and that in Hungary parties other than the Communist party will be able to stand. Of course, they then wonder why the Chinese people should be permanently kept from the democratic process.

I am optimistic that, between now and 1997, we will have an improved relationship with China. In the meantime, it makes sense to increase democracy in Hong Kong. I should like a Chinese-Hong Kong citizen to be elected as the chief executive, governor, president, or whatever the head of the administration is to be called. I should like HMS Tamar to be set aside for our future consul general, as the Select Committee recommended. However, those are small matters of detail when one realises that we can never really restore the confidence of the Hong Kong people because a silly speech in Peking or a foolish move by the military command can totally obliterate any feeling of well-being that may have been built up.

I encourage my right hon. and learned Friend and the Government to keep going on the path that they have set themselves. The agreement reached in 1984 was an astonishing agreement—a landmark in British diplomacy. If anyone doubts that, he should look at the concessions that the Chinese Government made to the British Government over Hong Kong. If we keep on the path that we have set ourselves and act with courage, I believe that history will show that we took the right course.

9.9 pm

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): I am certainly the only person present who has suffered under British colonial rule, root and branch. I was born in a British colony, so I have much sympathy with the people of Hong Kong.

Serious though the debate has been, there has been much hypocrisy. There have been two sorts of hypocrites: first, those who disgracefully tried to blame the people of Hong Kong for fighting for their rights, such as the right of abode. They said that the Hong Kong people are spending money on advertising and talking about things such as Armageddon. They sought to blame the victims for the situation in which they find themselves. That is completely abhorrent. The other hypocrites have been very sympathetic. They say, "We are so sorry about what has happened, but there is not much that we can do about it. Britain has nothing up its sleeve in terms of negotiation with the People's Republic of China, so we had better sit down and accept it". I reject thoroughly both of those views.

I pay tribute to the high-powered delegation of professionals from Hong Kong, including doctors and lawyers, who are in the Gallery and who have listened to the debate. They must be disappointed at the level of debate.

Some people have said that they oppose the right of abode. I am certainly not of that view. Some people have said that, if there is trouble in China, we can take people in as refugees. But the difference between a refugee and a citizen is immense. If a problem blows up in Hong Kong, perhaps in 1998, people coming here as refugees would be put in a refugee camp with no rights and would be treated in the same way as other refugees all round the world. They would be lucky if they could get jobs. But a citizen, with the right of abode could come to this country any time and do what he liked. He could work and participate in the National Health Service. He would not have to wait for the British Government to give him refugee status.

It was amazing that my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) should say that if the treaty is breached we will make those people British citizens. Is he saying that, in circumstances such as occurred in Tiananmen square, the staff in the British embassy would stay up all night handing out British passports to Hong Kong citizens so that they could come to Britain the next day? That is nonsense. That could never occur. If people try to lead others down that path, that is completely wrong.

Mr. Rowlands: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Grant: No, I do not have much time.

I am also worried about the position of the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman on the right of abode. I believe that Labour party policy is to repeal the British Nationality Act 1981. The residents of Hong Kong cannot come to Britain because, under that Act, they are deemed to be British overseas citizens. If the Labour party is pledged to repeal that Act, it would therefore repeal that provision, and Hong Kong people could then come to this country and have the right of abode. I hope that, when he winds up, my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon valley (Mr. Foulkes) will explain that apparent contradiction in Labour party thinking.

I want to pick up one or two points of the Foreign Secretary. I will not be one of those hon. Members who praised him, because I said in a previous debate:

> "The Foreign Secretary's contribution seemed a tiny bit complacent. He is trying to make out that all is well and that everything is under control, but my information is that people are very worried. They feel that there is a crisis of confidence in Hong Kong. There is a general feeling that the Government, having signed the joint declaration in 1984, are now about to wash their hands of Hong Kong."—[*Official Report*, 15 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 720-21].

I continued in that vein.

Today the Foreign Secretary also said that a Bill of Rights will soon be introduced which will incorporate all the rights and freedoms currently enjoyed by the people of Hong Kong. I welcome that, but will there be proper consultation with the people of Hong Kong before it is introduced? What mechanisms will be set in place to ensure that the majority of the people of Hong Kong—I stress "majority"—will be consulted on this issue? Will the rights in that Bill be enforceable by the courts against not only the Executive Council, but the Legislative Council? In other words, will the courts be able to declare null and void any laws that may be passed that violate the rights contained in the Bill of Rights?

The draft Basic Law contains no general right to non-discrimination, to equal opportunity or any rights against sexual or racial discrimination. Will that be remedied in the Bill of Rights that he is proposing?

I support those people who talk about 100 per cent. direct elections to the Legislative Council by 1995. A quarter of the Legislative Council should have been elected in 1988, but that was not done. It is important that 50 per cent. of the members of the Legislative Council are in place by 1991. The Government must also drop their previous insistence that reforms before 1997 must dovetail with the

Basic Law. On the contrary, the Government should insist that the Basic Law provides for the continuation of democracy.

The events are about real people. When we debated this matter on a Friday morning in July last year few hon. Members were present and certainly no right hon. Members, apart from the Foreign Secretary, were present. The position has changed dramatically since then. People's lives are being affected daily. In this debate I have not yet seen the emotion that I saw when I met people outside the Chinese embassy. I have seen no tears in here, but I have seen tears when I have spoken to people in my constituency whose families or friends have been murdered in China. When the House begins to take this issue seriously and when people begin to talk about the problems of real people, the House will achieve some credibility.

I want to give the Home Secretary an opportunity to do something. A Chinese person living here, Mr. David Choi, who is also known as Shu Lai Ming, and who used to work for the New China news agency, has applied for refugee status in Britain. If the British Government are serious in their concern for the people of China and Hong Kong, they should grant him refugee status quickly and they should give him the travel documents that he needs so that he can meet the rest of his friends and colleagues in Paris. That is something concrete that the Home Office could do quickly.

We have not been primarily affected by the problem. We can sit here and say all sorts of nice, plausible things that sound good and read well in the newspapers. I want people to take direct action and I hope that the Foreign Secretary and the Home Secretary will do something about the case I have highlighted.

I should have liked to have made several points about the draft Basic Law, the Legislative Council, and the special administrative region, but this is not the time to fine-tune our approach to such matters. This is the time to settle basic issues. One basic issue which I am ashamed has not been settled and is not being supported is the right of abode of the people from Hong Kong who are suffering or who may suffer. I hope that soon the British Government will alter their policy and allow those people into this country.

9.20 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): My feelings about this issue are undoubtedly coloured by my experiences of the past few months. At Easter I went to Peking and Hong Kong and enjoyed a remarkably encouraging and optimistic visit. I met a number of elderly, senior Chinese officials who had been victims of the cultural revolution and who were undoubtedly feeling that exciting and interesting experiments were taking place in China. They looked forward to a major improvement in the Chinese economy.

I came away from those countries and left behind my stepdaughter who, for nine months of this year, has been studying in Peking and has spent a considerable time in Tiananmen square. It became wholly apparent that, whatever eventually happened to that great demonstration, it began as a small group of students who were worried about the future of their education and wanted to speak to somebody senior in the administration. They did not want to change the political system or dramatically alter the way in which things were done, but simply to receive some assurance about the future of education and make the point that it would be reasonable to allow people to choose their own career, rather than being dictated to class by class by the central bureaucracy. It was the extraordinary failure of anyone to come out of the forbidden city and talk to the students about their problems which gradually caused the enormous change in the demonstration.

My daughter told me that throughout the demonstration people throwing stones were handed over to the police by the students. She said that anyone could walk anywhere in Tiananman square, down carefully kept paths which were remarkably clear, and that everybody was extraordinarily good-natured—far more so than normal—throughout those weeks in Peking. The idea that these people had to be shot down in cold blood or run over by tanks was such an extraordinary failure, both of will and of political skill, that it is not at all surprising that the people of Hong Kong should feel completely destroyed by it. It is a strange, and not, I hope, a significant coincidence that the Joint Declaration should have been signed by Zhao Ziyang. Where is he now?

Temperamentally, I feel very much drawn to the proposition that we should courageously gamble with the suggestion that everyone should be allowed the right of abode. However, it is perfectly clear that that is not a practical proposition, not least because of the long period over which this right would exist, and the extraordinary difficulty of policing the numbers and deciding who should, and who should not, be entitled to it.

There is a serious danger facing Hong Kong. It is not because in 1997 the Chinese Government will walk into Hong Kong with the intention of overriding the existing Government, taking over and going for the people of whom they disapprove, but because some editor, journalist or student exercising the historical freedom of speech to which he or she has become accustomed says something which cuts to the quick the thin-skinned rulers of China and is arrested for something which is not, in any shape or form, an offence under Hong Kong law. Then there will be some sort of riot justifiabily demanding the release of the detainees. At that point, the Chinese Government may well declare that the matter is an internal one concerning only their internal security. They will claim a right to suggest that the treaty has been torn up and they will take over. This is why I was especially glad that my right hon. and learned Friend said that the Hong Kong Government must be part of any decision on whether a state of emergency exists.

Since we are clutching at straws, let us also insist on much greater democracy in Hong Kong. When I was there at Easter, I was told in terms that any planter in a Somerset Maugham story would have recognised that we cannot let the people have real democracy—they would vote for the wrong people, most of them do not want it and would not know how to use it, democracy was terribly destabilising, and China did not like the idea anyway.

In fact, it was made clear to me by a number of other people that Hong Kong is ready for democracy. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) rightly pointed out, if there are already embryonic parties, the way to ensure a proper democratic Government in Hong Kong is for all who are not organised in parties to start organising. The enormous growth of pressure groups and voluntary organisations

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

working effectively to put their point of view to the bureaucracy in recent years clearly shows that Hong Kong is ready for democracy and should certainly be given it soon.

My right hon. and learned Friend and the Government should not under-estimate the generosity of the British. Letters from, and personal meetings with, constituents have shown me that they do not want us to behave dishonourably towards Hong Kong. They want us to decide generously whom to receive. If we go around talking about enormous numbers all the time, we could easily generate the sort of atmosphere in which even the 30 widows whom the Select Committee rightly suggested we should receive would be unwelcome. Alternatively, if we make a generous statement about how many people this country is prepared to receive, that will enormously strengthen our bargaining position with the rest of the world. How can we possibly ask the rest of the world to be generous if we are mean?

9.27 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): The only insurance policy on offer is one that Hong Kong people will have to organise for themselves. It needs to be a massively organised operation. It needs advance parties establishing themselves in host countries, viable in themselves and making a contribution to those communities from the start. The operation needs negotiation between the Hong Kong Government and not only national Governments but local, provincial, district and city governments. It needs lines of credit organised by banks accustomed to drawing on international financial markets to finance Chinese business. It needs the establishment of overseas operations outside Hong Kong and China by all the large and many of the small businesses in Hong Kong.

Preparations on this scale entail a migration of skilled professional people considerably in excess of the numbers now moving, as every insurance policy involves the payment of an insurance premium. If every job created by a Hong Kong Chinese for a Hong Kong Chinese leads to the creation of a job for a person in the host community, it will be possible to build up these advance parties and prepare the ground for a much larger-scale migration, if that were called for.

If all went well with the People's Republic, this Chinese diaspora would be of great benefit to Hong Kong and China because of the world-wide links that it would build up. If all did not go well, it would constitute a formidable sanction in the hands of the people of Hong Kong, which would make Hong Kong far less attractive to the PRC if it neglected the rights of the people there. The timetable for democracy to elect the Government that would be needed to carry this out, as set out in the Select Committee report, is too slow. There can be direct elections this year, with three months preparation, for 50 per cent. of the Legislative Council, with 100 per cent. in 1991, with not only the election of the chief executive from the Hong Kong Chinese, but also the appointment of heads of department and every senior officer of the Executive. The people of Hong Kong have only eight years in which to organise this effort. They must get on with it now.

9.30 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): In May, the official Opposition pressed the Government for a debate on Hong Kong, as we did last year, so that we could discuss the second draft of the Basic Law. If we had had that debate, we would have greatly welcomed the changes from the first draft giving greater autonomy to the Hong Kong special administrative region after 1997, agreed by the People's Republic of China, but we would have called for quicker progress towards greater democracy and we would have pressed a number of issues relating to the protection of civil and human rights within Hong Kong, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said. Sadly, as right hon. and hon. Members have so readily said, the tragic massacre in Tiananmen square and the subsequent purge, repressions and executions that continue today have dramatically changed the nature and the urgency of the issue before us and the world. We are today debating China as much as Hong Kong.

In our relations with China, the United Kingdom has a special responsibility to consider the effect of anything that we say or do on the future of Hong Kong, but the Government, and particularly the Foreign Secretary, have the balance wrong. The Foreign Secretary tends to confuse propriety and obsequiousness and to put commercial concerns higher than morality. The House should not need reminding of the brutal nature of the massacre. The dramatic media coverage brought swift and universal condemnation from all parties here.

We must also remember that our support and encouragement were given to the demonstrators in support of democracy in China. It was reasonable of them to believe that our support was genuine, not fair weather support, and equally reasonable of them to expect that we would stand by them if the going got rough—and it has become really rough. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition said a month ago, to acclamation from both sides of the House:

"the memory and meaning of one unarmed young man standing in front of a column of tanks in Peking yesterday will remain with the British people long after the present leadership in China and what they stand for have been forgotten."—[*Official Report*, 6 June 1989; Vol. 154, c. 14.]

That memory and meaning remain with the British people, and they remain with the Opposition. I hope that they also remain with the Government. If they do, the Government will have no hesitation in insisting that the 48 Group trade mission, led by Sir Trevor Holdsworth, president of the Confederation of British Industry, should be cancelled. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will say that unequivocally.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said earlier, and as I said yesterday, the Chinese Government are exploiting all these contacts for propaganda purposes. They put the telegram from the 48 Group saying that it was still coming despite the massacre on the front page of the *People's Daily*. How can Sir Trevor shake the hand of Li Peng while young students are still being brutally executed with a bullet through the back of the head? We must make it absolutely clear that it cannot be business as usual until the purge, the repression and the executions stop.

I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will confirm that the Government will help Chinese students in Britain and that that help will include extending visas for an open

period, issuing travel documents to those whose passports expire and enabling them to help themselves financially by allowing them to work here. It is to the students here and in other countries that a future, more enlightened leadership of China is, we hope, to be entrusted.

The events in China have sent shock waves through Hong Kong, as my right hon. Friend and I saw when we visited the territory within a week of the massacre. We accept that there is a great need for action to restore confidence, but I must respectfully disagree with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) as we do not think that it was adequately met by the tardy and dithering visit of the Foreign Secretary, even though we would not go as far as *The Times* leader in describing it as inept and pointless.

As the House knows, we are not in disagreement with the Government about the difficulty of agreeing to the request to grant the right of abode in the United Kingdom to almost 6 million people in Hong Kong, as some have suggested, or even the 3·25 million eligible for or holding British dependent territory passports, although we fully recognise the strength of feeling and the sincerity of those in Hong Kong who have argued that case. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup—when he was awake—rightly questioned the basis of the claim to the right of abode, or the obligation of this country to provide that right of abode.

In the time available I cannot answer all the points raised by the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). However, in answer to one point I must tell him that when dealing with matters of immigration, right of abode and the granting of refugee status, any consideration of the economic or social usefulness of potential immigrants, such as he suggested, is not only irrelevant but obnoxious. Surely we accept people as a matter of principle and not because they might boost our gross national product or alleviate our skills shortage.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. As the Opposition, on a matter of principle, opposed the 1981 Act—the consequences of which they now support—is he saying that their opposition was wrong at the time or that their actions now are wrong on the basis of that principle?

Mr. Foulkes: On this issue, as on the issue about which I intervened in the right hon. Gentleman's speech, he wants to have it both ways. He said that we should take people for the reasons that I have just outlined, and I think that that is wrong.

We criticise the Government for not presenting a clear, powerfully articulated and credible alternative for restoring confidence. Such an alternative comprises three elements. The first is a firm commitment to full democracy on a fixed timetable. The second is a resolute approach to dealing with China, with the reminder that it is in its interests not only to return to civilised behaviour but to keep Hong Kong stable and prosperous. As right hon. and hon. Members have said, it is in China's interests to say—and even more so to do—things that will help reinforce confidence in Hong Kong. Thirdly, and above all, we believe in the vigorous pursuit of an international safety net, first advocated by the Opposition and now endorsed by the Select Committee.

In every debate on Hong Kong in this House, the Opposition have pressed the case for early and extensive democracy, but we have had procrastination and excuses galore from the Government. Britain is on very weak ground when criticising the lack of democracy in China or anywhere else while we retain colonial paternalism in Hong Kong. We wanted direct elections in 1988, but tragically—and even laughably in the light of subsequent events—the Government said that the people of Hong Kong were neither ready nor sufficiently sophisticated for that. Now there can be no excuse for delay.

We fully support the formula of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee for 50 per cent. direct elections to LegCo in 1991 and 100 per cent. in 1995. We also want some discussion on the possibility of electing in 1995, on the basis of universal suffrage, a Hong Kong Chinese resident with the appropriate age and residential qualifications as governor and chief executive designate—notwithstanding the uncertainty and equivocation of the right hon. Member for Yeovil on the subject. The Government might say that that will need the agreement of the Chinese Government, but unless we take a stand and argue our case forcefully we shall continue to be perceived as kowtowing to the People's Republic of China on this and on other issues.

We accept that the views of the people of Hong Kong should be the main determinant of the nature and speed of introduction of democracy, but when there is no directly elected legislature to consult it is difficult to know how to determine what the views of the people of Hong Kong are. The assessment office device, which was used previously, was seriously flawed, as we have said in previous debates. If the Government do not accept, as the Opposition do, that the position is already clear from the current clamour for more and speedier democracy, surely a referendum on the options could and should be considered.

Of even greater urgency is an alternative to the right of abode. We have argued strongly that an international safety net is needed. That would not only be more credible because, as hon. Members on both sides of the House have argued, a group of countries could accommodate the numbers involved with less difficulty, but it acknowledges that many people in Hong Kong, if they really have to leave—we know that they do not want to—would prefer to join established Hong Kong Chinese communities in Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and other Pacific rim countries.

If that is to be credible as an alternative, it needs to be pursued with some urgency and, if reports in the press are correct, they do not suggest that the Government are responding quickly and urgently to the pressure from the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Opposition. The Foreign Secretary referred to that slightly more positively today, but a sense of urgency was still lacking. The Foreign Secretary's only response—the offer of passports to the elite—is the one which, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton said, is most likely to cause division and dissent within Hong Kong. We urge him to think again about that before making the statement that he promised.

On a more positive note, we welcome the commitment to introduce a Bill of Rights, but a number of questions on that are still outstanding—most notably those relating to its form and timetable. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will answer those questions, if not tonight, as quickly as possible. We also welcome the commitment to raise with the Government of China article 14 of the Basic Law on the stationing of troops of the PLA in the Hong Kong

[Mr. Foulkes]

SAR after 1997—with the firm intention, I trust, of altering it. However, none of that is yet enough, especially combined with the Foreign Secretary's muffled message technique to restore the flagging confidence to which the huge queues outside the Singapore office testify. It needs a strong commitment and urgent action on the three areas that I have outlined.

It would be wrong to have a debate on Hong Kong and China without dealing with the plight of the Vietnamese boat people. No one who, like my right hon. Friend and I just a few weeks ago, has seen those bright eager eyes behind the wire netting of the closed camps pleading not to be sent back to Vietnam could ever forget them. We endorse the British Refugee Council's deep concern that forced repatriation would mean them returning to re-education camps and ill-treatment.

The British Refugee Council rightly asked that we should encourage voluntary return, seek detailed promises from the Government of Vietnam on their care, get the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees further involved and develop improved aid and other links with Vietnam. Economic development there will encourage others to stay and those who have left to return. It is also imperative that the Chinese stop assisting the continued flow of refugees and that Britain takes a lead to ensure that all those who were in Hong Kong before June 1988 are resettled, as agreed in Geneva. That applies also to genuine asylum seekers beyond that date.

It would be wrong not to consider the other end of China, and acknowledge with some remorse that the events in Peking have vindicated those who said that we accepted the Chinese Government's version of events in Lhasa too readily, and that the West's timid stand on Tibet may have contributed to the Peking tragedy. We should question why we are more ready to forgive China's transgressions than those of other countries, and whether it is right to give trade and investment priority over human rights and morality. Of course we want to see our relationship with China return to normal, and of course we recognise the vital importance of that to Hong Kong—and we must at some time resume talks on the Basic Law—and of course we desperately hope that China will return to the path of increased openness, but we cannot and should not resume normal relations until the killing and repression have stopped. I am sure that eventually there will be the necessary rapprochement, but we should never forget those who sacrificed their lives for democracy.

9.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Timothy Eggar): We have had a full and serious debate. At times it has been impassioned, and rightly so. There have been many notable and memorable contributions. The House has yet again exhibited its unanimity of concern for Hong Kong—a unanimity of concern that transcends party boundaries, which was demonstrated in the report of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee. The speeches have, as usual, reflected right hon. and hon. Members' detailed knowledge of Hong Kong, its problems, challenges and successes. I shall try to answer as many as possible of the questions asked by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House in the time that I have available.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) asked about the proposed mission to China by the 48 Group of traders. I assure the Opposition that the Department of Trade and Industry is in consultation with the 48 Group, and the question of the Government's financial support is being reviewed in the context of those consultations. I understand that the 48 Group itself has been reconsidering its plans.

This evening the House has accepted that the fundamentals of the Government's policy on Hong Kong remain the right ones—right because they offer the best chance for the people of Hong Kong to sustain their way of life after 1997. That is what the people of Hong Kong want—and it is what Britain, the Government and this House want for them. It is also what China is pledged to accept without conditions—and to continue to accept as its own economic and political system evolves in the years up to and beyond 1997.

Tragic recent events in China mean that Hong Kong, understandably, looks to this House for reassurance. Many right hon. and hon. Members stressed the importance and extreme difficulty of rebuilding confidence in the territory. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley seems to think that it is simply a matter of discovering three magic wands, and of waving them, to make the problems go away. I do not pretend to believe that we can lay to rest all of Hong Kong's fears. The events of 3 and 4 June were too awful and too recent to allow us to say to the people of Hong Kong, "Don't worry." We would not presume to do that. However, we are working to give Hong Kong the reassurances that it needs—the reassurance of a Bill of Rights, of more changes to the Basic Law, and of more rapid progress towards representative government. We hope that, by doing so, we shall help to restore confidence in Hong Kong.

However, China—as many of my right hon. and hon. Friends said—also must play its part in restoring confidence in Hong Kong. China must demonstrate and re-emphasise its commitment to non-interference in Hong Kong—a commitment that it has already made.

I understand the feelings of many hon. Members that in these difficult circumstances it is right for us to give democracy to Hong Kong as quickly as possible. That is why we are carefully considering the pace and nature of democratisation. When we take these critical decisions, it is important that they are the right ones. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) said, a consensus is absolutely essential. It would be wrong to rush in and make snap decisions before opinion in Hong Kong has crystallised and to seek to impose our solution in this most delicate area.

Clearly, there has been a shift of opinion in Hong Kong. Even before the events of 3 and 4 June, OMELCO had called for a faster pace of democratisation. We need to see whether that remains its view. It is already clear that plans for elections in 1991 will have to be reconsidered. We shall pay careful attention to that. Ever since the 1984 declaration, we have aimed to achieve continuity up to and beyond 1997. The Hong Kong people understand and share that objective. It must be right for us to seek to ensure that the democratic system that we establish before 1997 should continue after the transfer of sovereignty to the People's Republic. Therefore, it is critical that the provisions in the Basic Law reflect the wishes of the Hong Kong people and carry forward the changes that we plan to make before 1997.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I have listened carefully to my hon. Friend. Does he accept that even the leading Chinese negotiator on the draft Basic Law has said that he will look carefully at all its aspects? Should the Government not therefore push as hard as possible to ensure that the Chinese are prepared to accept a faster pace towards democracy?

Mr. Eggar: I am sorry that my hon. Friend has misunderstood me. Naturally, we shall pay the closest attention to opinion in Hong Kong. Once it has crystallised, we shall press within the framework of the Basic Law for the correct outcome and marry the Basic Law with that opinion.

Dr. Bray: Will the Minister confirm that, until 1997, the constitution and administration of Hong Kong are the responsibility of the British Government? It will then be for China to adapt to the circumstances when it takes over in 1997.

Mr. Eggar: I agree completely with the hon. Gentleman. I wish to make it clear that we want to understand exactly how the people of Hong Kong feel on this critical issue. Once that view has crystallised, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall fight hard for their interests within the Basic Law.

Many hon. Members have commented on the right of abode. As my right hon. and learned Friend has made clear, there is simply no way that the British Government could grant several million people the right to come and live in Britain. Such a massive immigration commitment is equivalent to about 6 per cent. of our population. It would be wholly impractical; the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs agreed with that in its recent report.

It is more than impractical—it is wrong—to hold out the promise of an insurance policy in the knowledge that a future British Government could not possibly deliver. To do so would be a cruel deception. That having been said, however, the Government are looking as a matter of urgency at what can be done to meet the concerns of the people of Hong Kong, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary explained in his opening speech.

The scheme that we envisage will not apply solely to the rich and powerful, but will take account of factors such as the value of service to Hong Kong. Our aim is to encourage people from both the public and the private sectors whose skills are essential to Hong Kong's continued success to remain in Hong Kong, thus benefiting it between now and 1997.

Hon. Members have rightly emphasised the importance of the international dimension in seeking to give secure assurances for all the people of Hong Kong. It is clear that it would simply not be a practical possibility for Britain to provide such assurances alone. That is why we shall look for support to our friends and partners, who can help to reinforce confidence now by acknowledging that, if the worst comes to the worst, they have a responsibility to help. We have already begun discussions with our partners in Europe, the United States and the Commonwealth, and we intend to continue them vigorously at the Paris summit, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings and at subsequent international meetings.

For us, Hong Kong's future is a top priority. Many hon. Members have commented on recent events and on the repression in China. About a week ago, we took the opportunity to raise China's human rights record at a meeting of the United Nations economic and social council, and we shall be working unremittingly to ensure that China's leaders understand fully how much world opinion condemns their appalling actions. They should also realise that continued repression will inhibit the progress of economic reform to which they say that they are committed, and which is so important to the future of their country.

We do not intend to isolate China. I can assure hon. Members on both sides of the House who have urged me to do so that my right hon. and learned Friend will take whatever opportunities occur to meet his opposite number in China to put across the specific anxieties expressed today.

Today's debate is being followed closely in Hong Kong. The people are anxious for reassurance. That is why my right hon. and learned Friend went to Hong Kong: to hear the territory's concerns at first hand and to make it clear that Britain has not wavered, and will not waver, in her commitment to the people of Hong Kong. We are honest and honourable enough to acknowledge that there are assurances that we cannot provide, and limits to what we can do. That is inevitable: it follows from the Joint Declaration and from Hong Kong's historical and geographical position. As the House recognises, we are not free agents in the matter of Hong Kong's destiny, any more than are the people of Hong Kong themselves. That may be a painful reality, but it is a reality nevertheless, and we in the House and the people of Hong Kong must accept it.

The Government are not about to cut loose from Hong Kong. We are not going to leave its people to an uncertain future. As a physical manifestation of that continued commitment, we are already planning for a large and prominent consulate-general, as was requested by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. Britain will be fully engaged at every stage in the establishment of an arrangement that will ensure the continuity of Hong Kong's way of life after 1997, a way of life that has provided the basis for a remarkable success story——

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 19, Noes 0.

Division No. 298] **[10 pm**

AYES

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Fearn, Ronald
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Lamond, James
Livsey, Richard
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Sillars, Jim
Steel, Rt Hon David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Wallace and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

NOES

Nil

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

It appearing on the report of the Division that forty Members were not present, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Question was not decided in the affirmative.*

It being after Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

DANGEROUS DRUGS

That the draft Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Modification) Order 1989, which was laid before the House on 26th June, be approved.

DEFENCE

That the draft Visiting Forces and International Headquarters (Application of Law) (Amendment) Order 1989, which was laid before the House on 19th June, be approved.

ROAD TRAFFIC

That the draft Recovery Vehicles (Number of Vehicles Recovered) Order (Northern Ireland) 1989, which was laid before this House on 22nd June, be approved.

That the draft Recovery Vehicles (Number of Vehicles Recovered) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 22nd June, be approved—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Question agreed to.

Remploy Factory (Rutherglen)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10.11 pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): The purpose of the debate is to highlight the decision by Remploy to close its Rutherglen factory on safety grounds and relocate its 83 disabled workers at its Clydebank factory. The Rutherglen factory draws its work force from Rutherglen, Cambuslang, Castlemilk and south-east Glasgow, with a large proportion from East Kilbride. The catchment area is therefore very wide. If the factory were closed, there would be no employment opportunities for disabled people within that large area. All those places are further away from Clydebank than the present site and any workers who transferred would be faced with an additional 10 miles of travel, on top of the difficulties that they already face getting to the Rutherglen site. All credit is due to that work force, which makes tremendous efforts to get to work. Another 10 miles of travel would be the last straw for many of them.

The work force estimates that as many as 30 disabled workers would definitely not be able to undergo that extra travel. The local newspaper, the *Rutherglen Reformer*, has highlighted just one case where the proposed move would mean that the disabled person would have to give up his job. With upwards of 30 disabled people effectively being made redundant, so much for the boast of Mr. Trevor Owen, the managing director of Remploy, in a presentation made to the all-party disablement group in 1986:

> "We have never made a disabled person redundant."

The Remploy press release on the Rutherglen factory said:

> "In order to protect the jobs of the disabled workers at Rutherglen, the Board of Remploy has approved a substantial capital investment programme which will improve still further the employment facilities at the Clydebank Factory."

That is arrant nonsense. Employment opportunities for disabled people are governed by the proximity of the factory and the workers concerned. Progressively fewer people from the present catchment area would be employed at Clydebank, leaving the area devoid of such opportunities.

At a meeting, I was told by a Remploy representative that every effort was made to find other sites in Rutherglen and Cambuslang. When I asked, in writing, for the details, none was forthcoming. Subsequently, a senior Remploy representative told a meeting of the work force that no attempts had been made to find an alternative site, that none would be made and that, even if Remploy were offered a free factory, it would be rejected. The decision was made to reduce operating costs and economics demanded that the move takes place.

Questions must be asked about the direction that Remploy has taken, especially over the past five years. Why does the company seem to have lost its way from the original philosophy of providing employment opportunities for disabled people in the locality? It is not good enough to say, as I understand that Remploy representatives have said, that other areas have no such provision. The answer is surely to level up, not down.

Questions must also be asked about Government policy which has been implemented by the Government's appointees to the management and board of Remploy. The National Audit Office report of 1986-87 states:

"In November 1983, Remploy were asked to produce a business plan for the 4-year period 1984-85 to 1987-88 with a target of reducing government subvention so that by 1986-87 it would not exceed the employment costs of the disabled workforce. Remploy's four year business plan submitted in March 1984 showed that the bulk of the trading deficit (about £4 million out of £5 million) was accounted for by 20 of its 94 factories and that it aimed to meet its financial objective by increasing its profitable business but without closing any workshops or making workers redundant. Remploy's plan in fact provided for an increase in the number of disabled employees to 9,460 by 1987-88, but at an additional cost to DE of £6·1 million (though this was dependent on inflation factors and wage increase assumptions allowed for in the plan) in the three years 1985-86 to 1987-88.

In the rolled-forward plan covering 1986-87 to 1988-89. Remploy revised the performance predictions for 1986-87 and 1987-88, which had been put forward in the previous plan approved by DE, and requested additional funds above the Public Expenditure Survey provision for 1987-88 and 1988-89. DE did not approve additional funds and Remploy reduced the planned increase in staffing levels from 9,460 to 9,000 as a result. Although, therefore, DE/MSC do not seek to establish any direct control over the numbers employed by Remploy and in general Remploy management are left free to run their business as they think fit, DE's control of funding influences the numbers of disabled sheltered employment places available with Remploy."

So much for Government protestations that Remploy is free to make its own decisions. That freedom is clearly restrained by Government financial decisions. The Government are responsible for putting a financial squeeze on Remploy, which is forcing the company to depart from its traditional role of providing employment for disabled people in various localities. A parliamentary answer from the Department of Employment shows quite clearly that the proportion of the cost of employing people with disabilities at Remploy was 100 per cent. in 1984-85, 100 per cent. in 1985-86, 94 per cent. in 1986-87, 87 per cent. in 1987-88, and 90 per cent. in 1988-89, and the remainder was provided by the company from its trading surplus.

The public expenditure White Paper, Cm. 607, of January 1989, states:

"The aim is to provide sheltered employment in the most suitable and cost-effective way. During 1987-88 Remploy increased its turnover by £13 million to £91 million. The previous year's deficit of £0·2 million moved to a trading surplus of £1·9 million. The company's business plan for 1988-89 aims for a surplus of £2·8 million."

Remploy's report to employees of June 1989 contains a statement by Tony Withey, the chief executive:

"But we increased our sales by £9 million to £99·7 million and we increased the amount we paid towards our disabled wages—our 'contribution'—from £7·5 million to over £8·5 million."

A table in the annual report clearly shows that, from 1986 onwards, the Government's financial contribution to employing disabled workers has progressively fallen. I should not have thought that, in 1989, a case would have to be made for totally different criteria to be applied in the Remploy operation. Although in one year Remploy's excess of income over expenditure was £55 million, the estimate of net costs, after flow-back and savings to the Exchequer—I know that the Minister will understand the word "flow-back"—was just under £7·5 million. That is a relatively cheap cost for employing nearly 9,000 disabled people. Such costs have always been accepted as society's contribution to a vulnerable section of our society. I am confident that there is public support for paying those costs. In any case, the Rutherglen factory is profit-making.

The company seems to be using the excuse of the factory being declared unsafe to rationalise its costs to cope with Government restrictions. That is a dereliction of Remploy's duty as enshrined in the original Act of Parliament. The company was never intended to be treated as a wholly commercial enterprise, but it now seems that only commercial criteria are to be used.

As I understand it from the work force, Remploy has sold the factory in Rutherglen for £130,000. That means that the company is taking that money out of the Rutherglen area and it has had the nerve to tell me and local people that that will be for the good of the Rutherglen area work force. The company must know that many of these disabled people will be unable to travel further than they do at the moment.

Remploy has stated that a new factory would cost £0·75 million, but, as I have already said, the company has contributed a further £1 million from its trading surplus to the cost of employing its disabled workers. As I have shown, the effect of that is only to reduce the Government's share of those costs. I imagine that it is within the power of the Department of Employment to suggest to Remploy that a new factory should be built using that surplus. The Government would then meet the shortfall as they have in previous years.

In 1987-88 Remploy made a trading surplus for the first time. Therefore, let us be clear that Remploy could use its surplus to build a new factory or to reduce Government costs. Surely, for what is involved, it is not beyond the Government to suggest to Remploy that that £1 million would be better used to help the disabled than lying in the Government's bank account. In addition, the £130,000 from the sale of the factory could serve as a useful base for the £0·75 million cost of the factory.

That would enable the continued provision of employment opportunities for disabled people from a large catchment area. At the very least, it would mean that 30 people would avoid losing their jobs. It would also avoid long additional travel for the disabled people who might be forced to go to Clydebank. On the positive side, Remploy would retain a cohesive work force which has shown that it is profitable within the Rutherglen factory environment.

A trade union official has informed me that the Scottish Development Agency has made available to Remploy a factory of 10,000 sq ft at an annual rent of £22,000—in the Cambuslang investment park area. Although 10,000 sq ft was the wrong size, the rent is an indication of what can be made available from the Scottish Development Agency. I am sure that it will be able to come up with a suitable alternative site.

I appeal to Remploy and to the Government to find a new factory in the Rutherglen-Cambuslang area for those disabled pople, who have a hard enough life without losing a job which not only provides income but also proves that they can have independence. Their job means so much to them. I cannot believe that it is the deliberate intention of Remploy or the Government to cause so much hardship.

However, I have to accept that we live in a cynical world and that this could be a conscious decision by Remploy, backed by the Government. If that is the case and the factory is closed, as the local constituency Member of Parliament, I will neither forgive nor forget. I give the

[Mr. Thomas McAvoy]

promise that, on the return of a Labour Government at the next general election, I will pursue with that Government the question of exactly what happens at the Rutherglen factory, who made the decisions and on what basis. Depending on the answers, I will then campaign for the appointment to the Remploy board and management of people who will operate the company on the original principles and philosophy of helping disabled people, not throwing them on the scrap heap.

The Minister can act. I call on him to do so and I advise him that he will be judged by his actions.

10.24 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): I congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) on his good fortune in securing an Adjournment debate on this important matter, which is understandably causing considerable concern in his constituency.

People with severe disabilities have a real contribution to make to the economic life of this country and for over 40 years Remploy has been playing a major role in making that possible. For people with severe disabilities, the chance of employment—whether in a Remploy factory, on a sheltered placement or in some other form of provision—means independence, self-esteem and social contact, and it represents an important step towards integration into the life of the community. For many it means the chance, perhaps for the first time, to be appreciated and rewarded for their abilities rather than judged on their disabilities.

The creation of Remploy under the Disabled Persons Employment Act 1944 stemmed from the belief that disabled people—even those with severe disabilities—could, given the right support and opportunity, make a worth while contribution to the wealth of the nation.

Since it opened its first factory at Bridgend, south Wales, in April 1946, the company has expanded its commercial operations throughout Great Britain. In each of its 94 factories it seeks to provide employment in a normal commercial environment for people with severe disabilities of all ages and covering the widest possible range of disabilities. It is involved in many different businesses and trades, working to the highest standards for many of Britain's leading companies in such diverse areas as wood and metal furniture, surgical aids and appliances, clothing for leading high street store groups and other purchasers of quality goods, food processing, horticulture and an impressive range of packaging and assembly work. The company has always sought to adopt a flexible approach to the employment of people with disabilities, which has in recent times taken it into new manufacturing and service areas.

Since its formation in 1946, Remploy has steadily increased the number of jobs that it provides for disabled people, with the considerable financial support which my Department has made available. From a total of around 6,000 in the mid-1950s, the company is now providing jobs for around 9,000 people with severe disabilities. In addition, it also employs some 2,000 able-bodied workers.

In plans agreed with my Department, Remploy has, through sound commercial practice in recent years, increased its sales from £62·7 million in 1984-85 to £99·7 million last year—a 59 per cent. sales growth. As a result, the level of Government subsidy, expressed as a proportion of the company's disabled employment costs, has fallen, as the hon. Gentleman said, from 109 per cent. in 1984-85 to 93 per cent. in 1988-89. That is a considerable and commendable achievement, and the more so for being undertaken in quite difficult trading conditions.

Of the Government's total spending of £92·3 million on the sheltered employment programme in 1988-89, the contribution for Remploy amounted to £62·7 million. The programme itself is currently supporting jobs for some 19,500 people with severe disabilities, and is set to expand further this year with the continued growth in sheltered placements.

The substantial growth in sales to which I have referred has not been achieved by good management alone. Equally important has been the efforts made by the disabled labour force to help bring that about.

I am very happy to have this opportunity to congratulate all employees at Remploy on their efforts in recent years and to pay tribute to the flexibility and adaptability that they have shown.

Remploy is the major provider of jobs within the sheltered employment programme and operates as any other commercial undertaking in a fiercely competitive environment. It has a board of directors, appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, with substantial commercial and industrial experience to manage its day-to-day affairs in a normal commercial way. However, in addition to its normal commercial responsibilities, the board has to ensure that its decision-making takes proper account of the best interests of the company's disabled work force.

To ensure that it can make the fullest contribution to providing employment for people with severe disabilities, it is important that the company should also continually seek to improve productive efficiency in its factory network and to find opportunities to reduce its costs. Its success in the application of its commercial skills in this and other ways is important to the employment prospects of its disabled work force as a whole. While the company continues to receive substantial financial support from Government in recognition of the fact that the output of the people with severe disabilities whom it employs is limited by their disabilities—it is right that that support should continue—the financial resource is not without limit. The company must at all times, therefore, use its commercial judgment in making decisions affecting its factory network.

The present network of 94 Remploy factories reflects essentially the needs and priorities of the past 40 years rather than the demands of the late 1980s. That is also true of the geographical spread of sheltered workshops run by local authorities and voluntary bodies. What we have overall is an unevenness in the distribution of employment provision for people with severe disabilities. Some areas have little or no provision; others have concentrations—often of competing provision of similar kinds. In taking decisions today affecting individual factories, Remploy has to take account of its inheritance of a framework of 94 factories and that will, of necessity, affect its freedom of action.

In a wider context, the distribution of sheltered employment provision is an issue which my Department has been addressing. Primarily through the creation of more cost-effective and socially progressive sheltered placements, we are seeking to produce a more equitable

geographical distribution of resource, although this will take some time to achieve. The sheltered placement scheme, which allows people with severe disabilities to work alongside able-bodied colleagues in a wide variety of jobs and locations, has widened the employment choices for this client group and is currently supporting more than 5,000 jobs throughout the country.

As we look closely at what our sheltered employment programme has offered over the years, and can offer in the future, we need to draw on the best to provide the most appropriate support for as many individuals as possible within the resources that can be made available for all those with disabilities—whether severe or not—who require some assistance in finding and retaining employment. I know that the hon. Gentleman is genuinely and primarily concerned about developments in his constituency, but I hope that he will find these more general observations on the sheltered employment programme and the role played in it by Remploy helpful in putting into context the action that the company is planning to take in respect of its factory at Rutherglen, which is the subject of this debate.

I am sure that there is no dispute over the fact that it is necessary to close the Rutherglen factory on its present site because of the severe structural faults that have been evident for some time. I know that the company has considered fully all options available to it, including the possibility of building a replacement factory at Rutherglen, but on a different site.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether he can see the surveyor's report on the Rutherglen factory and other papers prepared for the Remploy board. As I have explained, Remploy operates as a normal commercial undertaking in its business operations, and the material that he has requested is regarded as commercial in confidence. It is for that reason that I cannot agree to ask the company to release the documents that he has requested. I am satisfied, however, that the company has acted properly in this matter in informing the work force of its decision and in seeking to do everything possible to protect the jobs of the disabled work force.

Clydebank is a modern Remploy factory, also in the textile sewing division, and it is large enough to accommodate the combined work force. The decision to transfer the disabled work force from Rutherglen to Clydebank will result in the better use of resources, increased efficiency and reduced costs and is, in the judgment of the Remploy board, the best way of protecting the jobs of the 83 people with severe disabilities currently employed there. To safeguard the jobs of those workers, the board has approved a capital investment programme to improve still further the facilities at the Clydebank factory. These are questions on which it is entirely proper for the board to reach decisions in the light of the information available to it. I am satisfied that the company has taken its decision with the longer-term interests of its disabled employees at Rutherglen uppermost in mind and with due regard to the commercial realities.

Nevertheless, I can well understand that those workers in Rutherglen who will need to travel the extra eight miles or so to the Clydebank factory each day would prefer a solution that did not involve this additional journey. For some of the physically disabled in particular, I appreciate that this may be more inconvenient and I regret very much any additional difficulties that this may pose. I have been very glad to hear, therefore, that the company will be doing everything possible to minimise the difficulties. Remploy has a good reputation for caring and its area personnel manager is in the process of seeing every employee individually to resolve any personal problems.

It is not always possible, of course, for employees to have their place of work right on their doorstep, and I understand from Remploy that on average the workers at their 94 factories throughout the country tend to travel some three to five miles to work, with some travelling as much as 10 miles. I acknowledge, however, that that will be of little consolation to those Rutherglen workers who will be faced with a longer and more difficult journey to work than perhaps they currently have.

I am pleased to hear that the company will provide special transport to Clydebank for those who need it, and will fully reimburse any additional travel costs incurred by disabled employees. If any employees in Rutherglen find it more convenient to move to one of the other nearby Remploy factories rather than Clydebank, the company will be prepared to consider this. By dealing with problems on an individual basis in this way, the company hopes to minimise the inconvenience to its disabled work force.

This is not, of course, the first occasion when Remploy has merged adjacent factories. Last year the company successfully merged three factories in Wales into a new factory to provide a more modern environment with improved working conditions. The majority of the workers involved came from a factory some nine miles from the new factory, and the company was able to carry out the merger without making any of the 75 severely disabled workers concerned redundant.

The company is seeking to take all necessary steps to safeguard the jobs of the disabled work force at Rutherglen and so provide continuity of employment for them.

I am sure that the hon. Member is also concerned about the future employment prospects of the 16 fit employees working at Rutherglen alongside their disabled colleagues. I hope that they, too, are successful in finding suitable alternative employment as soon as possible. The hon. Member will no doubt appreciate why the company must direct its efforts primarily to safeguarding the employment of those workers at Rutherglen with severe disabilities. The local staff from my Department will, of course, be pleased to assist the displaced workers in every way possible with any future employment or training needs that they might have.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising this matter and for giving me the opportunity of setting out the background. Naturally I share his concern about any inconvenience which the proposals will cause. I hope, however, that he will be reassured by the caring and responsible way in which Remploy is dealing with the effects that the change will have on the individual disabled workers at Rutherglen, as it seeks to protect their continuity of employment. I hope that I have made it clear that the board reached its decision on the basis of the commercial and technical information available to it and in a way that is consistent with its responsibilities to ensure that it can support the maximum number of jobs for people with severe disabilities.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-five minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 14 July 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Foreign Affairs

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Mr. Speaker: Before I call on the Minister, I must announce to the House that, in view of the many right hon. and hon. Members who wish to participate today, I propose to limit speeches between 11.30 am and 1 pm to 10 minutes. I hope that those called before 11.30 am will bear that limit in mind. Yesterday, a number of hon. Members were disappointed as a result of rather long speeches at the beginning.

9.34 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): Yesterday, the House examined the critical significance for Hong Kong of events in China. Today, is our opportunity to look at the broader international scene, which is very important. In the past six months, we have seen a unprecedented pace of change across the world—some might say a revoluntionary pace. The 1789 revolution which we, together with 34 other national leaders, celebrate with the French today, was far-reaching in its significance. At least the storming of the Bastille is unlikely to be re-enacted as a result of today's debate. The fireworks in Paris last night will today give way to political and economic co-operation in the summit 7 discussion this weekend.

I want to pay a tribute to the French. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] It was Valery Giscard D'Estaing who called the first summit, which has led in recent years to decisions which have well guided the economic recovery of the western world. It was an important and fundamental move with which we were entirely at one.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Chalker: No, because I have hardly begun.

With the other industrial nations, we shall be taking stock in the summit of the many changes all around us. Unlike the appalling tragedy in China, much of the change is encouraging. There has been the acceleration of political reform in the Soviet Union and parts of eastern Europe. There has been welcome progress in East-West relations and rapid progress in the European Community which, more than ever, is acting as a dynamo for Europe as a whole. There has been progress towards the resolution of long-standing regional conflicts, notably in southern Africa.

Last November, my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary said:

"we live in a time of great opportunity for constructive action by the United Kingdom in foreign affairs".—[*Official Report*, 25 November 1988; Vol. 142, c. 336.]

That is more than ever true today. The challenge we face —which this Government are facing successfully—is one of active encouragement with our allies and partners in the management of this fast-changing international scene.

Over the past 10 years, the Government's consistent, clear and practical policies have helped to lay the foundation for many of the positive developments that we are now seeing. We remain in the forefront of discussion on all the main issues. Britain's views are sought, Britain's voice is respected and Britain's experience is valued and all that is as it should be. It is a direct consequence of the way in which the Government are putting to work this country's established place in the international community. We are using effectively our membership of NATO, the European Community, the Council of Europe, the United Nations and the Commonwealth, and our extensive bilateral links. We are not simply part of the crowd and we certainly do not lack the courage to speak out for the policies we believe to be right. That has always been true in East-West relations and in our attitude to events in eastern Europe. It is here that the changes have, perhaps, been most dramatic.

The elections to the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies were the first steps towards a more open, representative system of government in a country not used to people power. In Poland, the process has gone a stage further with Solidarity's stunning victories in the freest elections for over 40 years—a quite remarkable outcome. In Hungary, the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the 1956 uprising reflects the new political freedom in people's lives in that country. It is interesting to note that in his recent visits to Britain, West Germany and France, Mr. Gorbachev has repeated his commitment to reform and his desire for greater co-operation with the West. At the United Nations last December, he argued for the removal of ideology from international relations.

Mr. Winnick: I welcome the reforms in eastern Europe, as the Minister probably knows. But if it is right that eastern European countries should be able to follow their own paths—one hopes that there will never be a repeat of what happened in Czechoslovakia in August 1968—is it not equally important that central and south America should be able to follow whatever path they want, without intervention from the United States? That means no repeats of what happened in Guatemala in 1954 and in Chile in 1973. It also means an end to the continuing efforts to destabilise the regime in Nicaragua.

Mrs. Chalker: The whole House knows that we believe in democracy in all countries. Sometimes democracy leads to unwelcome events; in this country it has sometimes even led to the election of a Socialist Government.

The changes that are taking place in the Soviet Union and in the East are of major importance. The failure of the Soviet economic model now contrasts sharply with the successful dynamism of the European Community. Mr. Gorbachev knows that he is being left behind and that is why the Soviet Union moved to establish diplomatic relations with the Community. Mr. Gorbachev has recognised what we—and most recently President Bush —have been saying all along: stability and prosperity will last only if people are free to determine their own future, economically and politically.

We realise that Europe has a historic opportunity to develop and to reduce the barriers that divide us. The

[Mrs. Chalker]

Government are determined to grasp the chance. We are ready for the co-operation that Mr. Gorbachev seeks and we are working consistently towards it.

For the United Kingdom, as for the West as a whole, our starting point in East-West relations remains the strength and unity of the NATO Alliance. Without this, we cannot be confident of our security or in our approach to the new opportunities before us. The Government have consistently upheld that simple principle, and will continue to do so.

The recent NATO summit demonstrated once again the strength, unity and confidence of the Alliance. President Bush, attending his first summit as head of state, offered an impressive example of constructive United States, leadership.

In NATO's 40th anniversary year, we can look back on a record of solid achievement. At the same time, we also look forward, in the words of the summit communiqué, to the possibility of moving

"beyond the post-war period"

to a

"new political order of peace in Europe".

I shall leave it to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Comonwealth Office, to comment further on our approach to arms control and relations with the Soviet union and eastern Europe. On the latter point, we have two related objectives—to develop stronger political, economic and cultural ties to help to erode decades of mistrust and to encourage, as far as we can, greater political and economic freedom in those countries, including real progress with human rights.

We shall continue to work closely with our allies and partners to achieve those objectives.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): My right hon. Friend has referred to work in eastern Europe and to co-operation with our allies. In a week that marks the centenery of the official recognition of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, would my right hon. Friend care to reflect on the way in which parliament and governmental diplomacy may help in these, as in other matters?

Mrs. Chalker: Yes, indeed, and I have seen the early-day motion in my hon. Friend's name. We have always believed that non-governmental organisations have a role to play. The Inter-Parliamentary Union is second to none in its work on these matters. All hon. Members will recall the visit to the United Kingdom of Mr. Gorbachev as leader of a Soviet IPU delegation in 1984 and the reciprocal visit led by Lord Whitelaw in 1986. I pay tribute to the continuing work of my hon. Friend and the IPU in this as in many other matters. The IPU can often forge links that it may initially be difficult for Governments to form. I remember also the work that the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) did before he became Secretary of State for Defence. Let us have bouquets all round.

Mr. Gorbachev spoke in Strasbourg last week of

"markets open for trade and minds open to ideas."

Where are those open markets and open minds to be found? The blueprint for Mr. Gorbachev's much-canvassed common European home is here in western Europe and in the relationships and institutions that our democracies have forged since the war. Those institutions include the Council of Europe, whose 40th anniversary celebrations my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary attended in May. With the accession of Finland, the Council of Europe unites all the countries of western Europe in a common commitment to respect and defend basic democratic principles and human rights.

The European Community has also covered much ground. The Community is stronger and more dynamic than ever and increasingly it is becoming a magnet for the rest of Europe. It is also a focal point for trade and development in the world as a whole.

Much of the European Community's present success is due to the efforts of this Government to give the Community real direction. There will always be those whose ideas are fixed—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] —and who misunderstand—I put it no stronger than that —the extent of our commitment to Europe. But it was our contribution that led to the reform of budgets and the common agricultural policy and to the single market programme. Those policies, more than anything else, have revitalised the Community. That is why the Community has become a subject of everyday relevance, both in Britain and beyond the Community's boundaries.

The voice of Britain came through loud and clear yet again at last month's summit in Madrid. Once more, we advocated a pragmatic, measured approach to Community development. The press promised blood in the bull ring—death, or at least defeat, in the afternoon—for the British approach. In fact the Community was the victor at Madrid. The Madrid summit marked an important step for the Community on several key matters. It was the end of a good presidency, exceptionally well conducted by the Spanish. It also reflected that the Community has learnt to set realistic targets and achieve them before staking out new ones. That was the essence of the businesslike approach that we have always advocated.

Economic and monetary co-operation is a classic example of an aspect of policy in which trying to achieve too much too quickly could be harmful. That is why we argued strongly that the decisions must not be rushed and that, far from encouraging progress, inflexible deadlines risk leading to wrong decisions. The force of those arguments was recognised at the Madrid European Council, which not only refused, despite pressure from some member states, to set any inflexible deadlines; we agreed that any intergovernmental conference must be preceded by full and adequate preparation. That is plain common sense.

The Madrid Council also recognised that there is no automatic link between stage 1 of the Delors report and the subsequent stages. We shall fully support the rapid implementation of stage 1. That, too, makes sense.

Practical progress in the Community is best achieved by allowing it to evolve, not by shackling it to detailed and mechanical timetables that could not necessarily be adhered to.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I am grateful that my right hon. Friend has given way, because I know that time is limited. She has outlined the important decisions that were taken in Madrid. These were taken by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister before she went to Madrid and subsequently the Government have not held any kind of debate in this Parliament and we have not discussed these issues. Therefore, the European Council has become totally unaccountable to national Parliaments.

Mrs. Chalker: I understand my hon. Friend's anxiety. He has expressed it on the Floor of the House, in Committee and to me privately on many occasions. It is not always possible to discuss the detail, but it is essential that the issues come up in debate, as they did on 18 May, when we had quite a full debate, in which I think that my hon. Friend took part. We have discussed these issues on many other occasions, and my hon. Friend will know that my right hon. Friend the Lord President is looking at ways to have more debate. I ask my hon. Friend not to press me today on decisions that my right hon. Friend the Lord President has quite properly taken, in conjunction with the Committees that have been looking into the ways to have more effective examination of Community business in Parliament.

Another important factor about the Madrid summit is that it formally confirmed the principle of subsidiarity. That is an awful word but a sensible principle. It is the principle that we should legislate at Community level only when national measures alone do not suffice. It is a principle with an excellent pedigree, as it is enshrined in the constitutions of both the United States and West Germany.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Subsidiarity?

Mrs. Chalker: I am sorry that the hon. Lady does not seem to understand and has not bothered to listen to the word. It has important implications for the House. Its acceptance by the Madrid Council vindicates the stance that the Government have adopted over many years and that has been endorsed by many right hon. and hon. Members in recent months when we have discussed European subjects.

Madrid also quietly approved a further important measure—our common-sense approach to the reduction of frontier controls. We have maintained the delicate balance between removing barriers to the movement of Community nationals and goods, while still maintaining adequate security. We have already succeeded in galvanising the Community into action against fraud. Now, concrete targets have been set, just as we wanted. The Council's conclusions now give new impetus to the whole anti-fraud programme.

These are the reasons why Britain and the Community have good cause to celebrate the outcome at Madrid. We can be satisfied, too, at the wide range of international issues—including China and Hong Kong—addressed in the Council's conclusions. They reflect the Community's outward-looking stance—and the scope of European political co-operation, which this country has done so much to develop.

We are also working closely together with our European Free Trade Association friends. EFTA is the Community's largest trading partner and our annual EC-EFTA trade is now over £140 billion. Closer integration between the EFTA countries and the single market will benefit us all. The Government fully support the efforts to establish even closer co-operation between the Community and the six EFTA countries.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): Now that Austria has announced its intention to apply for membership of the Community, will her Majesty's Government support that application, provided that no difficulty is raised over the non-alignment provisions of Austria's state treaty?

Mrs. Chalker: The question is not whether the United Kingdom alone but whether the whole Community supports the application.

Mr. Healey: What about the United Kingdom?

Mrs. Chalker: I understand that, if an application is received, it will be considered in the Council of Ministers on Monday next. Following such consideration, which I am sure will follow a similar path to other applications to join the Community, and as on previous——

Mr. Healey: Will the Government support it?

Mrs. Chalker: —as on previous occasions when an opinion has been given by the Commission, it will be carefully considered; then we shall decide.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Will the Government make the decision between today and Monday?

Mrs. Chalker: The opinion takes some months, as the hon. Gentleman will know. The latest opinion, on the application from Turkey, has still not been produced.

I have said many times that the Community is a western European success story. As such, it has a key part to play in the West's strategy for encouraging change in eastern Europe. We have a great deal to offer in the way of trade, investment, skills and training to countries pursuing reform. Britain has been at the forefront of moves in the Community to encourage change in Hungary and in Poland through trade and co-operation agreements, and the help that we can give them. We also strongly support the Community's decision not to pursue an agreement with Romania, so long as she continues to follow the bankrupt policies of repression.

Britain has worked hard to ensure that the single market's liberalising philosophy applies in the external as well as the internal sphere. We worked long and hard to ensure that our major trading partners understand that 1992 is an opportunity and not a threat, and the message is getting through. President Bush, speaking in Boston on 21 May, stated:

"We believe a strong, united Europe means a strong America."

We now find that American and Japanese businessmen are jumping aboard the 1992 bandwagon. One has only to look at the surge of investment from those countries into the Community in recent years to see the truth of that. There was another announcement yesterday. Much of that investment has come to the United Kingdom thanks to the Government's success in transforming Britain. We are now a welcome and profitable European home for many overseas companies. No one can doubt the Government's commitment to see Britain lead the Community in the 1990s.

The Government's commitment to liberalisation is clearly reflected in our approach to the GATT Uruguay round. Here, we have helped to develop a purposeful Community approach. No one should under-estimate the importance of a successful GATT round for keeping protectionism at bay. Major gains are to be had from extending the open multilateral trading system into new areas like services and intellectual property, as agreed at the mid-term meeting in April.

However, we shall not be able to realise these gains unless there is also substantial reform of agricultural trade. The Community is now, thank goodness, committed to

[Mrs. Chalker]

substantial reform, and this will continue in agricultural trade. That is another change for the better that Britain has helped to bring about. We have more work to do to ensure that the new Lomé convention—Lomé IV—which is under negotiation, further improves access to Community markets and Community aid for the developing countries.

We need to use our diplomacy to good effect in other places. We have already done much in the Community to help the developing world, but there is more to be done. In particular, there is more for Britain to do in helping to achieve the resolution of regional conflicts. The Government have consistently argued that negotiation, not confrontation, offers the best chance to put an end to the conflicts and injustices across southern Africa. At last, it seems that negotiation is being given the chance to work.

The agreement last December on Namibian independence was a major success for patient diplomacy. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made a personal, and valuable, intervention in support of the authority of the United Nations, when the peace plan faced an early crisis in April. The United Kingdom is making major financial and practical contributions to the United Nations force in Namibia. In addition, we are contributing £500,000 to help the repatriation of Namibian refugees. With our EC and Commonwealth partners, we are ready to help an independent Namibia. A stable and a prosperous Namibia will benefit not only its own people, but the whole region.

So, too, will a successful internal reconciliation in Angola and in Mozambique, and there are some welcome signs on this front. We continue to do all we can to encourage the process so that the peoples of Angola and Mozambique, who have suffered for far too long, will be helped to find, at last, peace, stability and some economic revival.

Change may also be in prospect in South Africa as the elections fixed for 6 September approach. Our policy towards South Africa has been balanced, realistic and constructive. In the past few months, my colleagues and I have met a number of South African politicians, some of whom are likely to play a prominent role in the next Government. We have emphasised to Mr. de Klerk and to others where we want to see signs of early progress—the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and other political detainees, the lifting of the state of emergency, the unbanning of political organisations and the initiation of real negotiations with credible black leaders without preconditions or constraints. In this context, we are encouraged that Nelson Mandela and President P. W. Botha have met. We do not know what will come of, it, but contact is better than no contact.

We believe that the new generation of South African leaders understands the need for fundamental change. Regrettably, apartheid will not be abolished overnight, but a start must be made. We want to see real movement towards a genuinely representative system of government after the elections. We have made this abundantly clear to Mr. de Klerk. We shall judge him by his actions, not his words.

Mr. Anderson: Will the Minister confirm that terrorism in Northern Ireland and the supply of arms by South Africa, or agents of South Africa, to terrorists was raised at the meeting between the Prime Minister and Mr. de Klerk? We consider that the timing was extremely unwise. Is it now the Government's view that there is evidence that South African agents were responsible for supplying arms to terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland?

Mrs. Chalker: I shall simply say that the issue certainly was raised between the Prime Minister, her colleagues and Mr. de Klerk. I ask the hon. Gentleman just to leave it at that for the moment. There is no question but that the issue was thoroughly raised.

I hope that the whole House by now realises that negotiation and the encouragement of negotiation in South Africa are not the only way in which we are trying to help bring about a speedy end to apartheid. We are also doing much to help black people in South Africa.

Britain is spending more than £25 million in the five years to 1992 to help South Africa's black victims of apartheid. We are setting up or supporting clinics, new housing, homes for children and the elderly, small black-owned businesses and schools, training and technical assistance. By 1990, we shall be financing 1,000 black South African students each year, and we intend to go on seeking to help through our system and with the assistance of many of our European neighbours, those people who have been denied their opportunities.

We are also helping South Africa's neighbours with substantial development aid and, in the case of Zimbabwe and Mozambique, with military assistance in the form of training their men. Presidents Mugabe and Chissano have made it clear to the Prime Minister how greatly this is appreciated and they repeated that again when she met them in Zimbabwe in March.

I have talked about our response to change in the international environment, but the phrase can be interpreted more literally still. The global environment, the natural world in which we live, is changing fast. We do not yet know enough about phenomena such as ozone depletion and global warming, but we already appreciate that they could be as significant for the future of this planet and thousands of millions of people, as anything now happening on the political scene.

Britain and British industry have led the way in international efforts to find out more about the causes of these phenomena and how they might be controlled. I am sure that the Government are at one with Opposition Members on this issue. The Government have a responsibility, with all other major countries, to help mobilise the international community to take action to protect our environment.

As part of that effort, in March we successfully co-hosted, with the United Nations Environment Programme, an international conference of more than 130 nations on saving the ozone layer. It attracted new pledges of support for the Montreal protocol, which sets targets for CFC emissions.

We followed that conference up with two major initiatives. First, we doubled our financial contribution to the United Nations Environment Programme, making Britain the second largest contributor after the United States and we have urged others to follow our lead. I am pleased to say that the Federal Republic of Germany has recently done so too. We have also called for steps to be considered to strengthen the United Nations Environment Programme institutionally within the United Nations system.

Secondly, we called for an international convention on global climate changes, which would commit signatories to reduce activities that contribute to global warming. That proposal has also attracted widespread support.

Environmental issues are often sensitive. Many developing countries put a higher priority on economic growth, but we are working to encourage the kind of co-operation that promotes sustainable growth, the wealth creating that does not cause irreparable damage to renewable resources. We do not want a grey approach. We are determined to succeed in the search for green growth —economic growth that is real but takes full account of the needs of our environment.

That approach has been reflected in the recent visit to Brazil of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development, where he signed a very important environmental agreement aimed at finding joint approaches to the exploration and management of forest resources and to environmental monitoring. It is a balanced and sensible agreement and we believe that it will be successful in operation. We hope that all the other nations will join in this vital approach to try to conserve our forest resources.

I have covered only some of the many areas in international affairs where the Government are making a significant contribution to the management of international change. The message is simple and clear—at a time of great opportunity, Britain is at the forefront in helping to shape events. In Europe, as in other regions of the world, and in areas of truly global concern, we are managing that change constructively.

The Government have solid experience, sound judgment and sensible, practical policies, and it is those that we are applying to the issues. We are meeting rapid change with a dynamic response. We are successfully defending this country's interests and at the same time co-operating with others to build a stronger, safer framework for the conduct of international relations.

Those are the achievements in which this country may justly take pride. We shall continue to be guided by those policies, which I now commend to the House.

10 am

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Any of us who seek some explanation for the timing of this foreign affairs debate on a sunny July Friday need look no further than what the Minister described as the fireworks in Paris. It is no coincidence that the acceptable face of Thatcherism has been left behind today to hold the fort and do a repair job on British-French relations.

Paying a tribute to the French must be highly uncomfortable, one would have thought, in the light of the displays of the Tebbit school of diplomacy of the past couple of days—the theory of making friends by insulting and abusing them at a time of maximum national celebration.

As the Minister said, we live in momentous times. The whole geology of international relations has been shifted in the past few years and the very pace of change renders practically every generalisation redundant almost as it is spoken. Even the past week has seen its share of major events. We have seen President Bush's significant sweep through eastern Europe and the speech by President Gorbachev to the Council of Europe just a week ago today. This weekend in Paris we shall see the summit of the richest Western powers.

Few people would have dared to predict, five years ago or even three years ago, that elections in Poland would trounce the Communist party, that Hungary would have campaigning, independent parties, and that even in Moscow an elected Parliament would robustly debate and declaim and even sack useless Ministers, an exercise which in this country is still carried out by the old Stalinist process that the Soviet Union has done away with. Some Conservative Members will get to power only by revolution while Opposition Members need only an election to do that.

We have also seen the formal end of the Brezhnev doctrine, the exit of Cuba from Angola and the Soviet Union from Afghanistan and major arms control agreements—some of them already signed and some of them promised. It must be a time for Britain to play a major or even a decisive part in this new world. As the Minister reminded us, we are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and a leading power in NATO and in the European Community. We are at the centre of the Commonwealth and we are still in the Group of Seven richest nations meeting in Paris this weekend. But the sad fact is that our impact on events is declining, not increasing. Britain is increasingly on the edge of the action and nowhere near the centre. After Ronald Reagan, the special relationship is no longer so special.

In NATO, the nuclear phobia of the Prime Minister left her high and dry at the 40th anniversary Brussels summit. Suddenly the Germans and their vision of a safer, more trusting Europe had America's ear. It was the German blueprint that won the day and the British policy of resistance to negotiations and short-range nuclear forces and a desire for new nuclear systems was firmly squashed.

Last month, the respected German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung—[Interruption.]* We all know that one of the chief talents that the Minister brings to Government is her fluency in German. I apologise for my lack of fluency. Because of her expertise she knows how influential, conservative and authoritative that newspaper is. It said that after the NATO summit, President Bush visited Britain only as a consolation prize for the Prime Minister after the end of the Ronald Reagan special relationship. The Minister will know just how damning that indictment is.

In the European Community, we stand totally isolated against the social dimension of the single European market of 1992. When the Prime Minister calls our Community partners Socialists and Marxist it no longer produces outrage but merely derision. In the Commonwealth, our eccentric resistance to sanctions against South Africa has left us on the fringe and our chair is empty. What a tragedy for Britain and for all those who care for this country to see us relegated in that way and to see our ability to influence those momentous events so reduced.

Much of our loss of influence is related to the Prime Minister's personality. She built a myth of a British economic miracle and held it up to the world as a shining example. It certainly got attention, and from those who did not look too closely it received praise and admiration. They now know better as, day by day, Britain drifts further into industrial strife, all of it legitimised by Tory laws. It can be seen that the short-term impact on productivity and performance through the intimidation of unemployment

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and the bludgeon of the dole queue did nothing for the underlying problems and divisions that so greatly hurt our economy. So much for the economic miracle. There is also genuine sadness about the lost opportunities and the wasted chances.

To be fair, in the early 1980s the Prime Minister's break from the cold war time warp opened some new doors and some old minds. Perhaps her influence on Ronald Reagan persuaded an elderly Right-wing populist that he could get into the history books. She achieved a breakthrough on Rhodesia and, at whatever cost in other areas, she forced some reason and sense into our EC budget contribution. Those were the credits on the balance sheet.

But all those credits were not part of a grand strategy or of any coherent idea of Britain's role in NATO, Europe, the Commonwealth or the world. They resulted from a personalised ego trip—a parade of single-minded grudges, complaints and croneyisms combined with the Prime Minister's obsession of getting her own way even when it meant winning battles before losing the war. The Prime Minister is a triumphant general of a dozen pyrrhic victories.

President Bush's tour through Hungary and Poland this week has shown the western response to what is happening and being allowed to happen in eastern Europe. More than anything else that response will dictate the sort of continent in which we will live for the next 40 years. One of the saddest headlines of the week was in Tuesday's edition of the *Financial Times*, a paper not noted for its sensationalism in foreign policy. It said:

"Bush heaps praise but not much cash on Poland".

Poland and its neighbour Hungary are on the brink of the unthinkable dream. Perhaps they will have a pluralistic democracy, contested elections and mixed economies and will see the return of choice in the shop and in politics. With those things will come freedom to speak, think and write and perhaps even freedom before the law. How often have politicians in the West cried out for the very things that now beckon the citizens of those two people's republics? How often have we urged, cajoled and even threatened the oligarchies that ran eastern Europe? How we sighed when, in East Germany in 1953, in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968 the fire of freedom was snuffed out. Now it could all happen, but suddenly everybody wants to wait for the Americans or the Japanese to do something. They want to wait to see whether Gorbachev will last the year and whether elections are allowed. If we keep on waiting there will be nothing to wait for. Unless democracy, pluralism or glasnost produces the goods, the old certainties and the comfortable old subsidised prison-camp states may again look too attractive to resist.

The crows are waiting for the experiments to fail. The Stalinists are not dead but merely wait for us to wait and for economic chaos to liberate the treasured designs of their past. The rich West has the resources to grip the problem, as former President Giscard d'Estaing said this week at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, if we act together now we can relieve the economic pressure and guide the sick economies along a path that will ensure stability. Of course, it requires imagination. It demands the same courage and vision and the same enlightened self-interest that launched the Marshall plan at the end of the second world war. It also demands generosity, even if the cash is tied and conditional and cautiously applied.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in Poland the Confederation for an Independent Poland and Solidarity are extremely wary of large amounts of cash from the West because they believe that they will bolster the existing regime? Is he also aware that it was precisely this sort of unfettered aid given by West Germany in the late 1970s which allowed the Stalinist Polish regime to remain in power?

Mr. Robertson: If the hon. Gentleman wants to intervene, it would help if he listened to what I am saying. I made the point that the aid can and should be targeted, it can be conditional and it can be involved in the projects that we in the West think beneficial, to Poland and to us. Solidarity's demand for aid was for $10 billion. President Bush offered $115 million. Solidarity does not see that as bolstering the Communist dictatorship. It sees western aid as salvaging democracy from the ruins of what could be the economic chaos that faces them.

This initiative from the West requires imagination more than anything else, and urgency. That is why the western and especially the British response has looked so grudging, ineffective and hopelessly disproportionate in the past few weeks. If I were a Solidarity activist in Poland contemplating sharing power and the extremely tough decisions that will be required with the outgoing Communists, I would remember vividly the ringing declarations of the martial law era and the chorus of noises of support that rose from every single western capital; and when I saw the meagre aid that President Bush brought, I would feel betrayed. We say that we should give aid as part of an agreed package, and that we should give it for specific projects such as pollution control, high technology investment, management and education. We say that we should give aid for private projects and joint ventures, but the key is to give aid before the fragile, trembling steps to freedom are crushed by the meanness and parsimony of mature democratic powers which waited and waited until it was too late.

I want to ask the Minister of State who will reply to the debate one specific question. He was reported in *The Daily Telegraph* as having said in Hungary on Tuesday that Britain was ready to provide support for Hungary's fledgling political parties in the run-up to free elections. Will the Minister be more specific about that? The seminars that he said were scheduled for some Polish and Hungarian politicians in the autumn will be run by the Great Britain/East Europe Centre, an admirable organisation on whose governing body I and other hon. Members serve. But the amount of money involved so far would hardly pay for the election address for a Bristol constituency, so if we are to have an impact on helping those new politicians and do not want all the work done by the magnificent, omnipresent German political foundations, much more cash will be necessary. How much will be available, and how soon?

The Prime Minister's increasing isolation is vividly on display in the European Community. We have heard a gloss from the most communautaire of the Foreign Office Ministers, but the European Parliament election campaign, masterminded as it was by the Prime Minister herself, was a miserable humiliation for the Conservative

party. The campaign was a churlish, negative, trivial display of arrogant mismanagement and it is small wonder that the electorate rejected the Tory party and the message that it put forward.

What was the response from the mastermind herself—an admission that she got it wrong? Not on your life. Was the advertising campaign the disaster that their losing MEPs and some Back-Bench Members said it was? Was the reason the Bruges speech and its hectoring repudiation of the Single European Act, which the Prime Minister had accepted and then told the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) to go to Brussels and sign? Was it her denunciation of her fellow European Right-wing leaders, whom she told, according to the *Daily Mail* in May:

"We think your attitude of putting people on boards and committees because they are a trade unionist goes back to the Marxist period, a class struggle period."

Apparently it was none of those explanations: it was all down to the weather. According to the Prime Minister, the First Lord of the Treasury of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, it was such a warm day that the Tory voters simply stayed in their gardens. That I find unbelievable, but it was the definitive political explanation from the Prime Minister of the rout and gutting of the Tory party—the humbling of a Government long on arrogance and short on common sense. Now the diminutive group of Tory MEPs crawls round the Palais des Nations in Strasbourg vainly trying to find partners willing to be tainted by the insensitive, crude, anti-Community attitude of the Prime Minister of Great Britain. That Tory group is still struggling to find companions in the European Parliament, which is perhaps the most vivid example of just how isolated the Government's attitude to Europe has become.

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon) *rose*——

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher) *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: Here comes the cavalry.

Mr. Curry: Has the Labour group yet settled the strike of the members of its secretariat in the European Parliament offices in London? They went on strike against the appointment of two extra staff in Brussels, following no consultation with the London-based staff.

Mr. Robertson: It is good to see how the hon. Gentleman, who abandoned his seat in the European Parliament to come to the lush pastures of Westminster, goes into the minutiae and technicalities of industrial relations in the British Labour group. The Tory group is so small it has no industrial relations problems. If that was the seventh cavalry, it tells us a lot about the defence policy of the Tory party.

Worse is still to come for Britain. Marginalised as it is by the personality of the Prime Minister, after Madrid she finds herself locked into a process of European monetary union which is wending towards its conclusion—a process which she had gone to Madrid specifically to balk. She returned from the summit full of the grand idea that she had got her own way again and told the House that her master plan and no one else's was on the table. All the other leaders went back to their countries and told the truth to the European people. We heard the truth from a source even closer than that. Why else did the Chancellor of the Exchequer say last week in Paris, as reported by *The Times*, that

"he would like to have had a say in the final compromise reached last month in Madrid"?

The Times reported that the Chancellor had wistfully said that it might have been better if finance Ministers also attended European summits. If the Chancellor of the Exchequer makes that degree of criticism, we can treat with true scepticism the laudatory noises from the Foreign Office.

Now there will be an intergovernmental conference which the Prime Minister tried to stop. She cannot stop it now. When it takes place, as it assuredly will, she can veto any treaty amendment that emerges but she cannot stop the others going it alone—perhaps outside the treaty—and Britain will be left attached to a train with no say over the route or the driver.

We find ourselves isolated and marginalised on European monetary union, and even more so on the social charter. Alone among all the European states, Britain sees the charter as a Marxist trap. All the other Right-wing parties see it as a crucial component of persuading workers that the single market is not just about business but is a vital prerequisite to what the Foreign Secretary told the CBI at dinner last month was a "level playing field" for trading. Our Government alone, in their private obsession—delusion, even—know better than the best that the charter is a Marxist danger.

I ask the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), who is probably as wet as the right hon. Member for Wallasey, to enlighten us. We keep asking which elements of the social charter have their base in "Das Kapital"? It is an intriguing question which the Foreign Secretary refused to answer on Wednesday. The draft charter has now been published; Madame Papandreou has put it forward. Which aspects of it led the Prime Minister to tell the *Daily Mail* that it originated in the Marxist period?

Mr. Healey: The same would probably go for Magna Carta.

Mr. Robertson: As my right hon. Friend says, that would be regarded as a Marxist document, too. Probably Joseph Stalin's interpretation of Marxism is the version that the Prime Minister accepts as her own working document.

Given Britain's isolation, it is small wonder that last week the distinguished Europe correspondent of *Newsweek*, Mr. Scott Sullivan, who is scarcely a supporter of the Labour and Left-wing movements in Europe, wrote:

"Thatcher's high-handed, arrogant manner often detracts from her good, or at least defensible, ideas."

He added:

"Labour's capture of the banner of Europeanism has goaded Thatcher into a spate of pettiness."

How true that is. The catalogue of pettiness includes the obstruction of the Lingua programme of language teaching in our schools and involves health warnings on cigarette packets, the veto on concessionary travel for pensioners and the twisting and turning on drinking water standards in which the Secretary of State for the Environment has been indulging this week. Mr. Sullivan's conclusion was spot on. He wrote:

"Margaret Thatcher, the most reluctant European of all."

The tragedy of it all does not rest only with the electoral kamikaze policies of the Prime Minister. The real tragedy

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is that our country will suffer for a generation because of her folly. Britain faces the single European market of 1992, and the years before it, with crippling handicaps.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has been attacking my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister throughout his speech. It comes ill from a spokesman of a party which has only recently found that it believes in Europeanism, which had to get rid of its European MEP leader immediately after the election to cover its embarrassment, which has more CND Members of the European Parliament than any other group, and which on wider issues has sat uncomfortably with NATO, being unsure whether it is unilateral or not. We could go on about the confusion in the Labour ranks. It would be much better if the Labour party were to try to find a consistent policy.

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends went on and on during the election campaign about the issues to which he has referred. When they were put to the ultimate test, the electorate chose to believe the Labour party and its vision of Europe. It rejected the carping and the negative views of the Prime Minister and those who toed the party line during such a dreadful and sabotaged campaign.

We are going into the single European market of 1992 with the highest inflation rate in Europe, along with the highest interest rates and the largest trade deficit, a deficit that is growing every month. As if that were not enough for our beleaguered economy to withstand, our vital manufacturing investment is still barely above the level in 1979 when the Government took over the economy. When education and training give all our competitors the edge, even before 1992, we are cutting higher education. Our training record is appalling. Teacher morale is at rock bottom and some children in London cannot even go to school because of teacher shortages. The Government are selling off the public sector and the seedcorn of Britain's future in the very market place that is the Prime Minister's dream.

I move on to the middle east. There is undoubtedly a major crisis facing Israel. That view is shared widely in the House. Even Israel's strongest and most robust friends throughout the world are in a state of despair about the suicidal shortsightedness of current Israel policy. As the intifada continues, the killings on each side go on apparently unrestrained. Every one of us—not only those who have strong affections for Isreal—shared the anguish and anger after the bus outrage last week. As each week passes we are ashamed by the killings of Palestinians in the occupied territories, yet the pointless and degrading violence on both sides continues.

The decision last week by the Likud hardliners to try to trap the party and the Government of Israel into conditions that will render the West Bank elections a travesty and a mockery of the very democracy on which Israel has always prided itself, must make the few remaining middle east optimists in the world weep with despair.

Mrs. Dunwoody: No one would dispute the point that my hon. Friend is making. He will be aware, of course, that over 70 men and women have been murdered in the West Bank and in Gaza because they "collaborated" with the Israeli authorities in moving towards some form of elections. I am sure that my hon. Friend will condemn that as strongly as he condemns other happenings in Israel.

Mr. Robertson: I warmly endorse what my hon. Friend says. The violence on both sides is indefensible and regrettable. Our criticism of the Israeli Government does not detract from the fact that violence on all sides is escalating and that we must seek a solution. In that context, it is regrettable that the Israeli Government have taken such a negative position.

I pay tribute to the Labour members of the coalition who joined in the tough decisions that the Government made to help the country. They helped their country to salvage its honour and now they must watch the Likud party destroying everything. The Labour group in Israel is right to threaten the coalition, even if it takes a few weeks to pull the rug. To stay with this doomed group of unrealistic and self-deluded bigots would be to hand a poisoned legacy to future generations of Israelis. If, as rumour has it this week, the United States is considering in the face of the Likud decision promoting an international conference on its own, can we be assured, and will the Government confirm, that the United Kingdom will back the conference? In the meantime, let us continue to impress upon those who will not see that security and safety for Israel will never be achieved by a gun being held permanently to the heads of those who are in the occupied territories.

Another area of the middle east should haunt the world. Within Iraq an unspeakable campaign has been mounted against the Kurdish minority. First, they were bombed and then they were rocketed. They were shot at and blasted into the mountains where they live. Much, much worse was to come. Last summer the Iraqi forces, freed from the war with Iran, were turned on their own people. This time they chose to deploy chemical weapons, which were outlawed by the civilised world after the first world war. At the village of Halabja the cameras covered the outrage. A horrified world saw for the first time the sheer barbarity and indecency of the slaughter of innocent civilians by poisoned gas. Last September, I visited the camps in south-east Turkey. They were full then, and, disgracefully, they are today, with the Iraqi Kurds who had fled from the poisoned gases that had been dropped on their villages. It was an unforgettable experience. The faces and the horrifying stories of those proud people will stay with me for ever.

For a time the West rightly reflected the outrage at the criminality that the Iraqi Government deserved, but soon —much too soon—it was business as usual. the Iraqi Government, having managed to face down the condemnation of the West, having ignored the vilification of the civilised world, and having seen that Governments such as ours, who had the evidence—in many ways the British Government produced the evidence—and who made the noises of outrage, then went back to doing business with the merchants of chemical death, learnt a cynical lesson pretty quickly.

The persecution continues in Iran. Entire villages are being demolished and communities are being devasted. Thousands of Kurdish people are being "resettled". They are being transported to camps at the other end of a vast country. The world remains silent as the campaign continues. The announcement this week of the order for Hawk trainer planes perhaps explains the silence. As the

genocidal use of chemical weapons lingers in the air, and even as the Kurdish villages are being bulldozed, the selling of war planes continues.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): Before the hon. Gentleman's statement becomes established mythology, I tell the House that no permission has been given to export Hawks to Iraq. Those matters have not in any way been decided.

Mr. Robertson: The Minister has answered the question that I was about to ask. The order cannot go ahead unless the Government give the OK. The Government's policy, which sometimes is a little frayed at the edges, is not to sell lethal equipment to Iran or Iraq. The Minister says that no decision has been made, but what do they intend to do? Will they block it? The Minister should have said not that a decision has not been reached, but that it had been reached and the answer was no. The Government must get off their knees and put real pressure on the Iraqi Government to stop their campaign against the Kurds. If they do not do that, they will live with the stain of the unfilmed, untelevised, but nevertheless very real atrocities.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I am glad that my hon. Friend has raised the problems of the Kurdish people in Iraq, and I am sure that they will be grateful for that. Although the Government may not allow the export of military hardware to Iraq, is it not just as beneficial to the Iraqi Government to be given banking facilities, credits and increased trade? They have exactly the same effect of propping up the Iraqi economy, which is used to finance the war machine that is practising genocide against the Kurdish people.

Mr. Robertson: My hon. Friemd makes an accurate point. One of the most indecent acts during the events last year was that while the Foreign Office was correctly expressing its outrage about the deployment of chemical weapons—as verified by the Government's defence research establishement—the Government sent a Cabinet Minister, no less, to the Baghdad fair to announce the doubling of trade credits to Iraq. How the Government can hold their head high when practising such double standards defies description.

This debate can cover only a small number of issues. It is a dramatic time; a time of real decision in the world. In South Africa, central and Latin America and the far east, the process of change is breaking up all the old preconceptions and stereotypes. It should be a time for Britain, in all the arenas where we still have influence, to play a decisive role in shaping the sort of world that will emerge. If we have become observers instead of players, marginal instead of central, ignored instead of listened to, that is a reflection of how British foreign policy has become an extension of the Prime Minister's increasingly personal and unstable style of Government at home. That style was on trial in the European Parliament elections last month. The Tory vision of Britain in Europe faced the test of the ballot box—the ultimate test of the British people. That vision and that style at home, in Europe and beyond, was solemnly rejected by the people of Britain. As the right hon. Lady ploughs on relentlessly, incapable of learning any of the lessons of that electoral disaster, she heads for an even worse result when she finds the courage to face the British electorate again.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the House that Mr. Speaker has appealed for brief speeches.

10.43 am

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): I am both pleased and honoured to be called so early in the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I suspect that this honour was not because of me, but because of the subject that I intend to discuss—the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and in particular the role of the British group. This is not just the centenary year, but is the centenary week of the centenary year of the IPU, and a bust of its co-founder, Sir William Randal Cremer, is sitting in the Member's Lobby. He is the first Back Bencher to be so honoured, so perhaps there is hope for all of us—the noble breed that carries on the work of this House by day and by night.

As most hon. Members are aware, I am a recent ex-chairman of the IPU. I congratulate and salute the excellent, capable and hard-working present chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall). He is ably supported in his work by the senior Opposition officer on the IPU, the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), who I note is deservedly sitting in his place on the Opposition Front Bench.

The British group and its responsibilities are rather different from most of the other groups in the 111 Parliaments of the world. It does not simply provide British representation at various inter-parliamentary conferences of both a plenary and, increasingly, a specialised nature, it also deals with the bilateral parliamentary relations between Britain and other countries. The ability to send delegations to any other parliamentary countries, coupled with the contacts between Parliaments that can be furthered above and beyond those bilateral delegations and visits, is essential to our IPU role.

In answer to an earlier intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State referred to the role that parliamentarians can play in international relations. That is now becoming both self-evident and appreciated, but it was not always so. My right hon. Friend's Department was a little slow on the ball in the 1970s, and even in the early 1980s, and it was not until after the Falklands war that it suddenly realised that such contacts were vital and that the Foreign Office needed to maintain a close relationship with the House, with the IPU being very much a part of that relationship.

Hon. Members are close to, but not part of, Government and, therefore, can meet their parliamentary counterparts on an informal basis and establish links, build bridges and float ideas. The Government cannot do that because, understandably, they are bound by Government policies and have to stand on formal positions. The combination of foreign relations between Governments—especially our Government—and parliamentarians is becoming increasingly useful.

I wish to state three examples that began during my time in office and have since been furthered. The first relates to East-West relations. It was not an accident that the British group decided to take the initiative on the eastern bloc at a time when it was far less fashionable to do so. It was not an accident that the IPU British group

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provided the vehicle for Mr. Gorbachev to make one of his most significant international visits in December 1984. Nobody would pretend that he came here simply to talk to Back Benchers, but it is fair to say that they definitely contributed to the success of his visit. I well remember the return visit led by my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Whitelaw, ably supported by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey). I have affectionate memories of that visit to the Soviet Union when the right hon. Gentleman gave an ample display of both his diplomatic and photographic talent.

The second example relates to Argentina, with which we have maintained parliamentary relations. It is my fundamental belief that at the right time—which I hope will not be too long delayed—those parliamentary relations will prove very useful. The third and for me the most important example is the way in which the British group has made a significant contribution to and a continuing development of parliamentary relations with the Republic of Ireland. We should all be conscious of and encourage that.

It is not for me to make a long speech about the various IPU conferences and the issues that they discuss. I want to deal with more general matters within the international work of the IPU. All of the 111 Parliaments of the world are members of the IPU. In the old days it was a sort of democratic club. In the 1950s it was under the world leadership of Viscount Stansgate—not an uninteresting fact—that a decision was taken that all Parliaments of the world, and in particular of the Communist countries, should be admitted. That has led to East-West contacts at all levels, now prominent in terms of governmental as well as parliamentary contact—but in those earlier days at least we maintained some kind of contact.

It is very pleasing when countries again become democracies and rejoin the Inter-Parliamentary Union. It is not often realised that when a coup occurs the country concerned is obliged to resign from the IPU if it does not have a Parliament. I well remember a conference in 1984 when I sat near the delegation from the Cameroons, which kept on leaving and then re-entering the chamber. The reason they kept leaving was that their president was losing a particular gun fight at the presidential palace. When he began to win the gun fight, they re-entered the chamber again. Fortunately, the Cameroons retained its Parliament by the end of that conference—but that particular delegation had a particularly busy and mobile time. Virtually all Latin American countries have rejoined IPU, and they have been very well received.

My second point concerns the uses that Governments, as well as parliamentarians generally, can make of the IPU in establishing positions. A Government's position is often reflected by the comments of parliamentarians. One example of that was the vote on the Falklands issue at the IPU conference in Rome in 1982, which was a most useful precursor to a vote important to Britain that was to take place in the United Nations one month later.

My third point relates to personal contact—the opportunities for which are legion in the IPU. Right hon. and hon. Members may smile when I say that the British-Irish interparliamentary body originated in part at a lunch given by the British group in Seoul in Korea. That seems an odd place for British-Irish relations to commence. Nevertheless, the Irish delegation on that occasion included the Speaker of the Irish Parliament and the parliamentary party leaders of both Fianna Fail and Fina Gael. That is an example of the opportunity that such conferences provide to establish useful contacts.

Finally, I pay tribute to the international work that is done in relation to the human rights of parliamentarians. As right hon. and hon. Members sit in the relaxed atmosphere of this Chamber, it is easy to forget that being a Member of Parliament is an extremely hazardous occupation in many countries. The work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in that respect has been valuable and has contributed to, if not directly led to, the release from imprisonment of hundreds of our colleagues since the war.

I recall that at the height of the repression of the Iranian revolution the Iranian delegation was put in the dock at an IPU conference and had to defend itself with regard to two prisoners whom I knew personally, and one of whom had gone blind. They were both released shortly after that conference.

The British-Irish interparliamentary body is an example of the IPU's bilateral work and stems directly from improved parliamentary relations through a continuous exchange of delegations with the Irish. After the joint studies report of 1981 and the Anglo-Irish Agreement, we now have, as the result of the marriage of governmental commitment on the one hand and of parliamentary action on the other, the body that we hope will shortly come into being and play a very useful role. I want to express my gratitude for the support I received both from the Government and from the official Opposition in forming that body.

Over the past year, the basis of the body has been agreed with the Irish. It will have 25 members a side, will meet in plenary session twice a year, and will have an appointed membership for the duration of each Parliament. It will be quite unique, and will provide something far more than just the normal exchange of delegations between two countries. We are at the stage where a formal application is about to be made to the Treasury for the independent funding of that body under the auspices of the IPU. Despite the ominous murmurings of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I am reasonably optimistic that the interparliamentary body will have its first plenary meeting next February.

As to the future, there is a need to exploit the parliamentary aspect of foreign and diplomatic relations to the utmost, and in that the IPU has a crucial role to play.

As this is the IPU's centenary week, obviously I have concentrated on its activities, but I must pay tribute also to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and to the British-American Parliamentary Group which, although their functions are slightly different, play an equally important role.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has been very helpful, and it is extremely conscious of the role that the IPU can play. The British-Irish interparliamentary body is a positive example of the future relationship between two Parliaments. We must consider carefully our attitude towards parliamentary groups and their funding, particularly if the IPU is to continue to operate effectively. It is not easy dealing with all the Parliaments of the world and for the IPU to be responsible not only for the British-Irish body but, for example, the virtually annual

exchanges with the Soviet Union. The IPU needs to respond to virtually every country of the world, many of which spend much more than we do on parliamentary relations—perhaps because they realised its importance before we did.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union is certainly not a travel club for right hon. and hon. Members. Its activities are becoming increasingly specialised and concentrated. Long may it continue, and long may it have the support of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

10.56 am

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): I hope that the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) will forgive me if I do not take up his points, except to reminisce that when I first attended the Council of Europe in the early post-war years one of the French Union delegates failed to return from the summer recess because he had been eaten by his constituents. There is a risk in being a member of some Parliaments that fortunately does not exist in our own.

I wish to echo the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and to describe both the opportunities and the dangers presented by the end of the cold war and Britain's role in meeting that challenge. The cold war is over. That is proved in a million ways. It is proved by the continuing talks on arms control and reduction between the Soviet Union and the United States. More importantly, and more convincingly, it is proved by the co-operation between the Soviet Union and the United States in areas of tension in many parts of the world.

In the middle east, for example, the Soviet Union is currently trying to shift the policies of both Syria and Iraq into more constructive directions. The United States and the Soviet Union, almost single-handed but with useful assistance from the British Government, produced the recent agreement on Angola. In the far east, co-operation between the super-powers seems likely to produce a settlement of the appallingly difficult problem of Kampuchea, and even on central America Mr. Shevardnadze recently handed President Bush a message indicating that the Soviet Union is ceasing its supply of arms to Nicaragua.

In the light of all that evidence, it is ridiculous to pretend that the situation is as it was even two or three years ago. Even more important in some ways is the fact that glasnost, which was introduced by Mr. Gorbachev, has finally destroyed Communism as an international force. Now that the Russians themselves admit the appalling state of their economy, and the weaknesses in their present democracy, and now that the world has seen the response of the Chinese Communist leadership to democratic protest by the students in Tiananmen square, it is not possible now to regard Communism as a threat to international stability. Some Communist parties might be a threat, but the international Communist menace has gone for ever.

However, I hope that we are beginning to realise that the cold war, by dividing the more powerful countries into two blocs under Soviet and American leadership, gave much of the world 40 years of moderate stability. If the opposing alliances had not existed, it is difficult to feel confident that Turkey would not by now have been at war with Greece, and, in eastern Europe, Hungary at war with Romania. The ending of the cold war has allowed the nationalisms that were suppressed in the opposing blocs to come to the surface again.

That is challenging many elements of stability in the modern world. Not only the Yalta settlement, which most of us would wish never to have been adopted, but even the settlement of Versailles is at risk in the present troubles in Yugoslavia. Concepts that were last familiar before the first world war are now re-emerging as forces in international affairs. For example, the concept of mettel Europa is now attractive to many Germans, Austrians, Poles, Czechs and Slovenes. We now face a world that is changing fundamentally as a result of the ending of the cold war.

Glasnost—the introduction of more openness in the Soviet Union—is now threatening the unity of the Soviet Union itself. After all, Russia is the last 19th century empire to have survived until nearly the end of the 20th century. In recent meetings of the Soviet Parliament we have seen very powerful national forces showing themselves in the Baltic states, in Georgia and in the Asian republics. All of them, to a greater or lesser degree, want something that they would call independence. How the Soviet Union comes to terms with this new wave of nationalism and what consequences it may have for stability in adjoining parts of the world is sometimes somewhat alarming to contemplate.

I noticed that, in a recent meeting of the Soviet Parliament, one Russian delegate even suggested that, if things go on like this, Russia should secede from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In the Russian republic now there is an extreme nationalist movement called Pamyat, although, fortunately, it did not win any seats in the recent elections.

One might think that, in some respects, the world is set for a return to the politics of the 19th century, but we cannot afford to return to the politics of the 19th century because the world cannot afford any more wars, even wars with conventional weapons. Science has created certain global problems that can be satisfactorily dealt with only by global solutions under the auspices of global organisations. We are all very familiar with the problems created by nuclear power, both in its civil and military forms, and we are becoming more aware of the problems created by chemical pollution which, like nuclear problems, recognises no frontiers and can be dealt with only by international action.

As I said when I spoke in our last foreign affairs debate nearly a year ago, it is a reflection of Britain's diminished role in the world, and indeed of Britain's diminished interest in the world, that we so rarely debate foreign affairs in their broader aspects. We used to have four or five two-day foreign affairs debates every year when I first entered the House about 40 years ago.

There is an overwhelming case, as I said last time, for trying to develop the United Nations as originally intended, as the basis of a world society, with appropriate institutions to fulfil that role. For the first time since the United Nations was set up, Mr. Gorbachev has created the conditions on which that might be done. For its first 40 years, the United Nations could not work as the charter envisaged because the Soviet Union did not believe that a world society was desirable or possible. I am sorry to say that the only person who still holds that view is the British

[Mr. Denis Healey]

Prime Minister, who believes that the word society has no meaning either at home or abroad. I will discuss the implications of her position in a moment.

Action on those problems is now extremely urgent for two reasons. First, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton said, we cannot be certain that Mr. Gorbachev will remain leader of the Soviet Union for the rest of his natural life. There is a growing and dangerous gap between his ideas and Soviet reality. That gap is well expressed in the saying that glasnost has given the dog more freedom to bark as perestroika pushes its food bowl further away. The deterioration in the Soviet economy over the past few years is bound to create dangerous tensions in the Soviet Union, and could lead to some changes of direction in Soviet domestic policy, although not to any significant change in Soviet external policy. The facts that produced the change in Soviet foreign policy under Mr. Gorbachev are facts whether or not he is there and are bound to influence his successors, if he goes, as much as they have influenced him.

There is a second reason why the problem is urgent. We have imagined far too lightly that the problem of world peace and stability are mainly for the super-powers and their allies. We now see military missile technology spreading fast all over the world. Already 22 Third-world countries have missile programmes, and 17 have already deployed missiles. Some of those countries either already have nuclear weapons or the capacity to acquire them quite fast. In all cases, they could use missiles to fire the poor man's nuclear weapon, chemical weapons, a problem to which my hon. Friend rightly paid attention.

Unless we can proceed much faster than Governments presently seem prepared to envisage in building an international framework through the United Nations for coming to grips with some of the problems, we may find that this weather window—this moment of opportunity—is passing. The new situation creates special problems for us in Europe. I will mention a few of the more obvious.

How can we help east European people to return to the community of Europe, which is not necessarily the same thing as the European Community. How can we reconcile the return of east European peoples to Europe with the desire of the European Community in its narrower sense to strengthen its internal cohesion? That problem raises some difficult questions, which, I am sorry to say, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office dodged when I asked her about the Government's attitude to the Austrian application for membership of the European Community—an application which may be followed in the next year or two by applications from Sweden and Finland, and it is possible to envisage applications by Poland and Hungary within four or five years.

The question of how, if this development proceeds, the inevitable dilution of the European Community can be reconciled with many European countries' desire to increase the internal coherence of the existing Community will create some difficult problems for us quite soon—perhaps even in the coming months.

Another question that we must consider is whether it is possible to Finlandise eastern Europe, which has rightly been described as a sensible objective, without Finlandising at least parts of western Europe. That raises some very difficult questions. When he opened the debate for the Opposition my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton rightly criticised President Bush for offering so little financial economic assistance to Poland. I do not quite understand why the European Community, which is now as wealthy as the United States, should not take the lead in offering financial and economic assistance to eastern Europe, a lead that it would be much easier for the Soviet Union to accept than a lead by the United States. So far, however, apart from a very interesting speech this week by ex-President Giscard d'Estaing, there has rarely been even speculation about these problems by any of the western European leaders, least of all, I fear, by our own Prime Minister.

The central question that bulked so large in the recent NATO meeting was how, in the new situation, to meet the special needs and fears of that newly-created state, the Federal Republic of Germany, which is already feeling the pull of the concept of mittel Europa that to many Germans is another word for Gross Deutschland. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] It is all right for hon. Members to say, "Hear, hear", but these problems are with us now and underlie many of the tensions that were evident at the last summit.

With some reluctance I turn to what Britain is doing in this extremely challenging though sometimes dangerous but also hopeful new situation that has been created by the end of the cold war. As I said earlier, one problem is that the present Prime Minister rejects the mere concept of society. She says that the word has no meaning. She rejects it—as we saw at NATO and at the recent European summit at Madrid—just as much in the international context as in the national context. She has nothing to say on these issues, except to go round the world parroting about the need to protect national sovereignty. However, by agreeing to deregulate the British financial markets and by taking the lead, as the right hon. Lady the Minister of State said, in asking for an open industrial and commercial market in Europe by 1992, she has abandoned British sovereignty. No one knows better than the Chancellor of the Exchequer that he is no longer master of his own economic and financial policies. He can be blown off course by events not only in Europe but in Latin America the United States and any other part of the world. We enter the new period in a somewhat dangerous position—very much weaker, relative to our partners, than we have ever been before.

Today's summit in Paris has exposed Britain's economic weakness. In its report the other day, the OECD pointed out that Britain has now lost fifth place among the world's largest economies to Italy. For the last two years we have been producing less than Italy. We have higher inflation now than Italy, something which would have been inconceivable to many of us a few years ago. It is obviously unfamiliar to many of the bemused faces which I have stirred out of their hebetude on the Conservative Benches. I am not, of course, talking about the Government representatives on the Treasury Bench.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Labour Government managed to get United Kingdom inflation far above that of Italy.

Mr. Healey: No, with respect, they did not. The interesting point about the inflation gap between Britain and her European partners is that it was much lower when we were in power because inflation generally was much higher. It was pointed out in the *Financial Times* the other

day—I apologise for responding to a sedentary intervention by the Minister of State—that the big difference between the time when we were in power and now is that the terms of trade deteriorated by 17 per cent. in the industrial countries during the 1970s. During the eight years of this decade that deterioration has been reversed. That is the main reason why inflation has been a much less serious problem, but the gap between the British inflation rate and that of our European partners is larger now than it was. At no time when the Labour party was in power was our inflation rate higher than that of Italy.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton pointed out, we now have higher inflation, higher interest rates and a bigger balance of payments deficit than any of our major competitors and any of our colleagues in western Europe. That is not a good position from which a British Prime Minister can influence the policy of Britain's partners in any of the international organisations to which we belong. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister has not, like Mr. Gorbachev, removed ideology from the sphere of international relations. She finds it almost impossible to make a speech these days which is not redolent with comic strip nationalist ideology—the only ideology, apart from that of the market, with which she is familiar.

During the last year the right hon. Lady has met every challenge by insulting all her allies simultaneously, which is a very odd way for the Prime Minister of a country that has been reduced to weakness to talk. She accused President Kohl and Mr. Genscher of "wriggling" after the last NATO summit. She insulted President Mitterrand repeatedly at some press conferences, as I see the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), recalls. Although she has not yet told us so, it is quite clear that she regards President Bush as an upper class wimp, so wet that one could shoot snipe off him. However, it has not helped Britain, or even the Prime Minister, to add the diplomacy of Alf Garnett to the economics of Arthur Daley. However, that is the twin blessing that she has showered on us in recent years.

As I pointed out in the House the other day, the Prime Minister instructed Mr. Bernard Ingham to tell *The Daily Telegraph* correspondent that she was going to help Kohl to screw Genscher. Instead, Kohl helped Genscher to screw her, and he did very successfully. I apologise for the word, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it is Mr. Ingham's, not mine. I should have been infinitely more delicate in referring to the operation that was carried out.

The Prime Minister even rewrote the whole of British history by telling the French this week that they should not be so proud of liberty, equality and fraternity because we first introduced it in Magna Carta. I learnt some history when I was a little boy. My impression was that Magna Carta had been imposed on a wicked British King by the barons. It brought no freedom to the ordinary people of our country. If the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity existed before the age of enlightenment in 18th century France, I suppose they existed among some members of the Roundhead group in the British civil war, notably among the Levellers.

That has not done the Prime Minister very much good, either. I read this morning, to my horror, that our Prime Minister was booed by the people of Paris when she appeared yesterday at a ceremony to commemorate the rights of man. I suggest that we all write a letter to her, offering our support, as she may find that essential. I understand that tonight the right hon. Lady will be accused by the French Prime Minister on Channel 4 television of what he calls her "social cruelty"—a nice phrase that will figure more often in our debates in the future.

The Prime Minister has isolated herself in Europe, in NATO and in the Commonwealth and has done so at a time of our greatest relative economic weakness. I should like to make a timid suggestion because I want to help the Prime Minister to overcome the problems created by what my Peruvian psychiatrist friend rightly described as—what was it? I have forgotten it, but it will come back in a moment. The Prime Minister would do well to confine her rottweiler politics to her Cabinet colleagues, who are now quite used to the virago intacta and who, in any case, never feel it possible to answer back.

Better still—I am being daring in making the suggestion in the presence of the right hon. Lady's two loyal advocates on the Government Front Bench—would it not be a good idea to let the Foreign Secretary run British foreign policy and to give the Foreign Office a look in? The Box is strangely depleted now and I suspect that that is because three of the civil servants have gone out to divide "Das Kapital" into sections and to find out which particular section justifies the Prime Minister in describing the European Community's social charter as a Marxist document.

What is odd and disturbing about the Prime Minister is her position on Europe and especially on the need for some institutional structure to underpin the open market which she wants and which the Minister of State has told us that she is working so hard to achieve. It is not a wild idea to say that, just as the horrors in Peking, which the House debated yesterday, came about because the freeing of the market was not accompanied by the creation of democratic institutions to regulate and control it, so the freeing of the European market could lead to appalling disturbances and disruptions, unless it is accompanied by institutions capable of regulating and controlling it, of which the proposals in the social charter can undoubtedly be one.

It is now clear that, if the Prime Minister is serious about environmental problems, she must agree that the rich countries should help the poor countries to adopt techniques for, for example, freezing food, which do not involve destroying the ozone layer. If she wants to deal with the drugs problem, the rich countries will have to help the poor countries, which depend on growing crops which produce drugs, to find alternative ways of making a living. There are many such countries in Latin America and in southern Asia.

Until the Prime Minister takes off the rusting and decrepit medieval armour which she loves so much and returns from her time-warp to join us all in the 20th century, Britain will remain, as she has alas become, an irritating irrelevance in world affairs whose importance does not even require a response.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that speeches made between 11.30 and 1 o'clock must not exceed 10 minutes in length.

11.23 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): I was able to say a few words yesterday about the Chinese question, and I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me today. I will, indeed, be brief.

Before I leave the subject of China, I should like to refer to a statement made by the Under-Secretary of State who replied to yesterday's debate—that we must go slowly and find out the views of the people of Hong Hong. We are past that stage now. Nobody with any deep acquaintance of Hong Kong and nobody on the spot doubts for one moment that the people of Hong Kong want to move faster towards the democratisation of the colony. Clearly, saying that we must go slowly and find out their views does not answer our point.

I want to make two points on Europe, which are tied up with what the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) has been saying. I have had the opportunity in public in the past few weeks of making known my views on the European position, and I shall not follow the right hon. Gentleman in several of the points that he made. First, we are hearing a great deal about the Council of Europe at Strasbourg, which many of our colleagues in the Community treat as a further weakening of our attitude towards the Community. Perhaps that is because this is the Council's 40th anniversary. It achieved useful work, especially in relation to human rights, during its early years, but it was formed as a forum for discussion and nothing more. It has never been able to fulfil any other purpose than being a useful forum for discussion. We used it when we discussed the future membership of the Community.

The Prime Minister has praised the Council continuously in her answers to questions. Again, that raises doubt in people's minds about whether the British Government want to weaken the Community rather than to strengthen it. I want to make it absolutely plain from my point of view—and, I think, from that of many people in the country—that the Council of Europe is no substitute in any way for anything which the European Council does——

Mrs. Chalker *indicated assent.*

Mr. Heath: I am glad to have the endorsement of the Minister of State. I know that my right hon. Friend strongly supports the development of the Community. I am pointing out the reaction in the Community, with which I am always in touch, to what is said when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister warmly welcomes the Council at Strasbourg in three successive weeks and, in answers to questions here from Labour Members, says, "Yes, of course, it is a splendid organisation, doing much better work." I want to make that point clear, in view of our relations with our Community colleagues.

My second point relates to the development of Europe. Looking back on the past two years, one sees that it has changed with bewildering rapidity. As the right hon. Member for Leeds, East has said, many of the questions are open ones. At the moment we can give answers to some of them, and I should like to try to do so briefly.

The first question relates to our attitude towards Austria—and, as the right hon. Member for Leeds, East mentioned, to Sweden and Finland also. My view is that, until the end of 1992, the Community has all that it can manage to handle when dealing with achieving the open market by 1992. I have spent five years in negotiations in the Community and I know the burden that that places on everybody, from Foreign Office Ministers downwards, when trying to reach agreement about a future member of the Community. Therefore, it is not practically possible for the Community also to handle questions such as the admission of Austria, Finland or Sweden.

Secondly, Austria is bound by the treaty of 1955. I know of no indication from Mr. Gorbachev that he is prepared to waive that treaty and to allow Austria to become a member of the European Community.

Thirdly, I do not believe that, from the point of view of the Community after 1992, we can admit neutral members. Therefore, we must ask whether Austria is prepared to give up neutrality to come into the Community, even if the Soviet Union would allow it? Having been in close touch with those in authority in Austria, I must report that I have had no indication that Austria is prepared to give up neutrality.

The same thing applies to Sweden and Finland. When the right hon. Member for Leeds, East asked whether the solution was the Finlandisation of eastern Europe, I must reply that Finland has existed, under skilful political manoeuvring, in its present position because it has acted without upsetting the Soviet Union and without becoming fully tied into the European Community.

Mr. Healey: Ireland is a neutral country by its own choice, and that has not prevented it from joining the Community, being welcomed there or taking part in all its discussions.

Mr. Heath: Of course, it was part of our negotiations. Ireland is the exception that proves the rule. Most of us hoped that, when we became a member of the Community with Northern Ireland, like the Republic of Ireland, the Republic's attitude towards the common defence of Europe would change. I still believe that there is a possibility of that happening, but it has not happened so far.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heath: I am sorry, but I shall not give way because I must be brief. If it were not for that, I would gladly give way, because the hon. Gentleman used to be a very strong supporter of European policy.

Looking still further east, I do not believe that there is evidence to make us work on the basis that Poland or Hungary, let alone Czechoslovakia, is in a position to seek membership of the European Community. For all Mr. Gorbachev's policies, is he prepared to see the break-up of the Soviet empire? I do not think so for one moment. Of course, I am strongly in favour of having a proper working relationship between East and West—we did a great deal to achieve that, from the first test ban treaty in 1963 onwards. I do not believe that Mr. Gorbachev is prepared to see the break-up of the Soviet empire, with those countries becoming members of the European Community when the Soviet Union is not.

It is becoming fashionable to say that Europe should go as far as the Urals. That raises an additional problem: what happens east of the Urals? Will that be the remaining Soviet Union? Will the Soviet Union break from east of the Urals? These are hard, practical questions. The idea is completely unrealistic. It gives everyone the impression

that we want to abandon the treaties that we have signed and weaken the Community. Anyone who looks at a map knows that this is the utmost nonsense from beginning to end.

Our task is to make a success of 1992; then other countries that are prepared to become full members of the Community can do so. So long as the Soviet Union exists, I do not believe that Sweden, Finland or Switzerland will regard themselves as able to join—Austria may want the best of both worlds,b but I do not believe that it is possible for it to have it.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State used a word with which I am not familiar and which I cannot pronounce, but she said that it meant that we will go on doing everything we can. I am afraid that my view differs. A deep difference of philosophy exists. Our attitude in other aspects of international relations is that if we can do anything together, it is better to do it together. This is why the public have lost confidence in us, as evidenced in the Euro-elections. They ask, "Why be in a minority of one?"

For example, why be in a minority about the notices setting out the dangers of smoking? Common notices would simplify the manufacturers' job, and that fits in with the rest of our philosophy. Why should they not be allowed to have such notices, or be told to have them? Public opinion is increasingly in favour of persuading people not to smoke. There is a big lobby, about which I am getting many letters, saying that smoking should be forbidden in Whitehall offices and that people should be able to work without being interfered with by smoking. We can take a legal view—even if it is not justifiable—that this action cannot be taken by the Community, but if it is a benefit to everyone, why not take it?

Exactly the same thing applies to languages. Our children desperately need more languages. Why do we say that this cannot be done by the Community but not do it ourselves? This is an extraordinarily extreme, legalistic bureaucratic approach. We are the bureaucrats, not the Community which is trying to achieve this aim. The same thing applies to cards for pensioners so that they can get their benefits wherever they go in Europe. That is what ordinary people want. They want to be able to get the benefits of Community life. Why should we stop it? The public do not understand why, as emerged clearly in the Euro-elections. The Government were obstructive, bureaucratic, rigid and dogmatic and we were not getting the benefits offered to us. The general public could not see anything more foolish than that.

There is a difference of philosophy. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will pursue her real belief that we should work together inside the Community to the utmost extent and not take a dogmatic line that makes us say that, if something does not happen to fit in with one or two views in Government, we should not follow it. We should be clear what our scope can be in the future, certainly until 1992, and by then, no doubt, the international picture of what will happen between East and West will be clearer.

11.35 am

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Yesterday's debate on Hong Kong and China was rather sad—perhaps it would be better to say that it was "realistic", because that it the fashionable word to use. It harshly displayed where we now stand—something on which the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) touched. It showed that our country, which recently—certainly within the memory of most hon. Members in the Chamber—dominated the world, is largely impotent and notably lacking in generosity. The rising sap of Empire has become like a dribble of spittle from the corner of an old man's mouth.

Even little poverty-stricken Portugal demonstrates greater responsibility towards its citizens in Macao, yet, after listening to the Minister of State, I believe that we still seem capable of remarkable self-deceit. The picture that she painted—she does it so well, persuasively and nicely—of a progressive, forward-looking Britain, leading policy in the European Community and in the world at large and widely admired by everyone, is one that I fail to recognise.

In the short time that I have to speak, I should like to touch on a few matters to which we could, in co-operation, make a more positive contribution.

I must point out that, although appeals were made to the Front Benchers as well as to ordinary mortals, the Minister took 34 minutes and the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) took 35. It seems a bit hard for the rest of us, even if we speak for a party, to get 10 minutes.

I should like to say a last word on Hong Kong. Yesterday, the debate did not address the question of what we will do if, at the agreed time of handover in 1997, events similar to, or worse than, the massacres in Peking are taking place. If contingencies are to be discussed with other Ministers in the Council of Ministers, they should consider what we would do if it were unthinkable that the handover should take place when it was supposed to take place.

I should like to refer also to our position in the European Community. It is difficult to add much to what was said so effectively by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and the hon. Member for Hamilton. It is certainly a travesty of the truth to suggest that the United Kingdom is taking a lead. We are following in economic respects, kicking and struggling against Delors, who is backed by the French and Germans, in our response to the social charter, and in our ideas on regional and social policy. We are isolated and we are not being terribly diplomatic. I shall not go over again the remarks that the Prime Minister has made about the French revolution, but they were hardly diplomatic.

The hon. Member for Hamilton mentioned President Gorbachev's speech in Strasbourg a week ago yesterday. I heard that exciting speech. Having heard the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, I should like the Minister to say something about what the Government think the Council of Europe should do. It is a perfectly fair question. Apart from its work in human rights, which is largely the work of the court, there is its work in culture, which is useful. It also appears to be now developing a role in making a bridge across the iron curtain. It is possible for Hungary to become a member of the Council of Europe. It will not be possible for a long time yet for Hungary to become a member of the European Community or to leave the Warsaw pact, but it is possible for Hungary, Poland and others and, if the process accelerates, even the Soviet Union itself, to join the Council of Europe, as Mr. Gorbachev said. That is a role that the Council of Europe may fulfil and I would like to know the Government's

[Sir Russell Johnston]

view. If the Council of Europe is to have such a role, it will need a higher profile and more money, as it has none at present.

Mr. Gorbachev's speech was less encouraging in one respect, which was that it emphasised the limitations of interference in state powers and the fact that a limitation of state powers was inadmissible. In other words, he was against interference in domestic affairs. However, with human rights, there is no such thing as other people's business. The fate of the Turks in Bulgaria, the Hungarians in Romania and the Kurds are all our business. I would like the Minister to describe the Government's view on that.

The Government could have said that we would not sell the Hawks. I do not know what further deep discussions are necessary. We all know what Hawks can do or not do and the argument about whether they can be used only as trainers or in other roles. I would have thought that it was generally agreed that they could be used in other roles.

Mr. Gorbachev has pointed to the great potential of the United Nations now that the Russians co-operate fully. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East referred to that. We have a chance to develop peace-keeping forces that will be more effective than the United Nations force has managed to be in southern Lebanon. The Government have not been very supportive of the United Nations. When are we going back into the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation? It is about time that we did.

What are the Government doing to further the concept of an international conference on the middle east? I know that the Minister takes a steady, sound and sensible view of the middle east. I want to refer briefly to the death of Moshe Kol, of whom many may not have heard. He was one of the founding fathers of the state of Israel and a former leader of the Israeli Liberal party. He was a man with a great commitment to pluralism and he represented the good, positive side of Israeli politics, which is in retreat at present, although it is still there—if hard pressed.

I also want to pay tribute to another individual who is about to leave the political scene and whose example of high courage has been an inspiration to many. I refer to Mrs. Helen Suzman, who has served for a long time in the Cape Town Parliament and who will shortly cease to sit where she has so consistently and bravely attacked apartheid. What is the Government's present relationship with the Commonwealth on the degree of pressure to be applied to South Africa to bring about the end of apartheid? What role are the Government playing in the difficult, but hopeful, negotiations which will follow the ceasefire in the Angolan civil war? There is still a wide gulf between the view of President Dos Santos from Luanda that the rebels should be absorbed and President Savimbi's view that there should be an interim Government and free elections. As we are in favour of pluralism, I imagine that we are working to further the latter view, and I would like to know the position.

I am afraid that my time has all but run out and I hate to be told to sit down, Mr. Deputy Speaker, although fortunately that does not often happen. I want to conclude by myself by saying that the right hon. Members for Leeds, East and for Old Bexley and Sidcup, in different ways, were both wholly right in saying that the way forward for this country is not to go round shouting about nationalism, but to develop a real community sense within the European Community and to make the fullest possible contribution to the international agencies, many of which we have sadly shunned in the past.

11.45 am

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston): I agree with him strongly on one point. I attended virtually the whole of yesterday's debate, and I agree that it was a sad debate. To add a footnote, I am extremely grateful to the Government for responding to the application made by me and other hon. Members that Chinese students should have their visas extended for six months, which at least gives a breathing space. There is also a private fund, for which Sir Alec Cairncross is responsible. I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends whether, if the need arises, the Government will consider contributing to that fund. I know that many of my own students in Cambridge are under severe financial difficulties.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) that we do not debate foreign affairs very often. I recall when I first came here in 1955, in a different capacity, that one of the great features, apart from episodes such as Suez, was that there was virtual agreement between the parties on foreign affairs and defence. A signal example of that is the approach to Namibia. Resolution 435 was passed under a Labour Government and was supported by the Conservative party in opposition. The present Opposition, and especially the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), have strongly supported the Government throughout the process, which we hope will end happily. There are still difficulties, and I have real apprehensions about intimidation in the elections, but I am still optimistic that the Rhodesia-Zimbabwe experience will be important. I would welcome warmly Namibia's arrival in the Commonwealth.

I want to concentrate on the middle east, where we are dealing with a rapidly changing scene. The adage about a week being a long time in politics has particular reference to this week, because the position now is different from the position on Monday. The new conditions on the elections of Palestinians imposed by Likud must be regarded as a major setback, although I do not regard it as disastrous. None the less, the process has begun and must be encouraged. I do not share in the criticism of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary for meeting yesterday Mr. Bassam Abu Sharif of the Palestine Liberation Organisation. However, I understand the concern it has caused in certain quarters. When we talk about Israel, I hope that we do not give the impression of interfering in the internal affairs of a friendly country. I much regretted the remark of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who described the democratically elected leaders of a friendly country as "deluded bigots". Such language coming from a party spokesman is helpful to no one.

There is a long record of British involvement in the Jewish national home and in Israel. One thinks of people such as Arthur Balfour, Churchill and Victor Cazalet. That friendship is enduring and durable. However, it also often requires considerable patience as well as understanding. I was struck by the final words of my right hon. Friend

the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) in yesterday's debate. He was referring to Hong Kong, but his wise words have great relevance to the middle east.

"Let us be open and frank. We now face the most difficult task in politics: to remain patient in unknown circumstances that we cannot control and to which we can see no immediate answer."—[*Official Report*, 13 July 1989; Vol. 156, c. 1183.]

Our role with Israel is to encourage and to praise as well as to warn and to criticise. There is much about which to warn and much to criticise, but I hope that the people of Israel of all parties, not necessarily the Government, will recognise that in this country there is not only a tradition of support and friendship which goes far beyond the Jewish community and which I call the wider diaspora, but a desire and belief that that nation should and must succeed.

There may be dismay at particular actions and deep unhappiness about certain aspects of current policy, but the deep friendship is there and surely we are entitled to look not only at the area as a whole and to our friends in the Arab world, but to our friends in Israel and to exercise our right as friends to warn and criticise but also to encourage and praise.

11.50 am

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I, too, propose to refer to the middle east, although the hon. Members' references to important aspects of European policy have been of considerable interest to me. Many of us regard the Community's attitude towards foreign affairs as one of its most interesting and perhaps one of its most defensible aspects.

When we discuss difficult questions such as the middle east, in this democratically elected Parliament, it is tremendously important that we remember that Israel is also a democratic state. In recent years we seem to have grown into the habit of holding forth about the difficulties of the Israeli Government without making it clear that we understand that Israel has always remained faithful to its democratic traditions. The Government party elects parliamentarians, which cannot be said of many other parties in the world. The party has also criticised many internal decisions, and the action of the Israeli Labour party, in seeking to debate in considerable detail the decision by Likud to limit the negotiating position of the Government, shows some of the best aspects of democracy at work. The Labour party is anxious not to destabilise the Government, but it cannot accept limitations on negotiating positions vis-a-vis its Arab opposite numbers.

Sometimes, in our anxiety to promote peace in the middle east, we seem to represent the PLO as the only democratic organisation. In fact, it is manifestly nothing of the kind, and the very welcome statement about the acceptance of the right of the Israeli state to exist has not been confirmed by the Palestine Council as a whole. In such circumstances, it would be helpful if this Parliament occasionally made it clear that we reject violence wherever it comes from. Those on both sides of the debate must accept that. It is true that we have seen more of what happens in the Israeli controlled territories, but my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) described the truly terrifying situation in which the Kurds in Iraq find themselves. He made it clear that one of the things that distressed him most before he was able to visit the camps was a television programme about the effects of the use of poisoned gases on the Kurdish people. But it is fairly unusual for that problem to be dealt with in the media. Although the appalling genocide against the Kurds is debated from time to time, media coverage is neither constant nor clear, and the reason is very simple. Whereas it is possible to get pictures and comment from Israel, it is not easy to get such comment from Iraq or the surrounding states. That is an important point.

One of the strengths of the Israeli people has always been their openness. Their openness in debating their internal problems can be disastrous. I admire the fact that, when the Israelis have a problem with their army personnel, for example, they make it clear that they propose to take action against the person involved. They have courts martial and open control of their army representatives. That is the right way to proceed. I hope that, in similar circumstances, we would have the same degree of openness in the United Kingdom, although I am not sure that we would. I should like to think that that was how democratic states dealt with problems presented by internal disturbances.

None of that means that we should not have considerable reservations from time to time about the actions of Israeli political parties. It is precisely because the Israelis have a democratic system and a political divide that we can support those of our own political persuasions and those who support the democratic system. That is what we do and what we shall always do. It is most important that Britain, above all, should not be seen to be supporting only the PLO.

The opportunity exists to open talks. I would welcome the development of an electoral system in the West Bank and Gaza, but that can happen only when Arab candidates are allowed to come forward in safety and offer themselves for election. To that end, it is important that the Israeli Government do not impose preconditions on the negotiations. It is equally important that the PLO makes it clear that it will cease any form of physical attack against its own people if they offer themselves as candidates in an election. Only when the deaths cease will we begin to believe that the PLO wants to move towards some form of electoral representation capable of negotiating with the Israeli Government. There is a window of hope, but it is very small, and any action on either side that makes it more difficult to proceed will be savagely damaging.

The British have a particular role to play in the discussion. We should not always appear to be openly critical and not encouraging. We should not always highlight violence on one side and not on the other. Above all, we should say that, as elected representatives of a country with democratic traditions, we support an electoral system in which political power changes hands side to side at the wish of the electorate, and not at the wish of those who seek to dominate by the power of the gun. We should understand that those are the traditions that Israel seeks to support and encourage Israel to come to the negotiating table. We should not say, "You must agree to these conditions" or seek to lay down preconditions in talks with the large nations such as the United States and the Soviet Union. We should simply say to the Israelis, "You have a great deal of which to be proud. Do not retreat into the laager and give more power to your enemies who will then suggest that you have abandoned all that is best and most powerful in your tradition."

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

The middle east is a vital area, and it is essential that we should support the democratic and properly elected representatives who can negotiate the peace settlement that we all seek.

11.58 am

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South East): I am afraid that constraints of time prevent me from responding to the various observations about our membership of the European Community. I think that it is true that some Conservative Members are disappointed about certain aspects of the stance of the British Government on our membership of the Community. Certainly, this was the case in the recent European elections.

I shall speak this morning about the situation in the middle east. Before discussing the conflict in general terms, I shall make a few remarks about United Kingdom bilateral relations with a number of countries in the region. Earlier this year, four members of Parliament visited the Yemen Arab Republic, North Yemen, and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, frequently called South Yemen or Aden. The PDRY, is the only Marxist Moslem state. Its economy is weak and it is a poor country by any standards. Hitherto, it has had close political ties with the Soviet bloc. However, there are signs that the PDRY is anxious to improve political relations with the West. For example, it is talking to the United States through a third country.

This change of emphasis is in part due to the change in leadership that has occurred in the Kremlin. In the Brezhnev era, there was a far cosier relationship than there is now, under Mr. Gorbachev. Incidentally, the same change in emphasis was also apparent when I visited Syria last October. Leaders of countries such as Syria, the PDRY and the Yemen Arab Republic no longer enjoy the automatic confidence and support of the Soviet leadership, whether it is manifested in political or economic terms.

I hope that the United Kingdom will respond positively to any favourable signals emanating from the PDRY. Any improvements in such relationships will be modest. We are talking about increasing the number of English language teachers, providing more student places in our universities for people from South Yemen and possibly helping tangibly to develop their agriculture. It is not without significance that, all through the period of difficult relationships with that country, following our withdrawal in 1968, British Petroleum continued to assist the state refining company.

The country now has mineral wealth, with high quality marble that is undeveloped, and it will need help from the West to develop it. There is also oil. The geographical location of the oilfield is significant, because it extends across the frontier into South Yemen, and the two countries, which until recently were at loggerheads, have formed a joint company for its development. Parallel to this commercial development between the two is the establishment of joint commissions at governmental level. These new arrangements are still in their infancy, but the United Kingdom should take a close interest in this development.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary visited San'a earlier this year. From the remarks made to us, I know that his visit was much appreciated, and there was universal agreement about its success. However, we cannot and must not rest on our laurels. North Yemen is very much flavour of the month as a destination for international statesmen and Ministers. The country has recently joined Egypt, Iraq and Jordan in forming a regional economic group. This relationship could have significant implications, and it is important that Britain should become as involved as it can with this development.

Our relationship with Iran has not yet been discussed this morning. As the House will know, I was one of five parliamentarians who visited Tehran some 13 months ago. During last summer and autumn, some improvements took place in our relationship with that country, because there was evidence that Iran was anxious, after eight years of Islamic revolution, and almost an equivalent time when it was at war with Iraq, to rebuild some bridges with the United Kingdom. We then had the Salman Rushdie affair, and our Government's decision to withdraw our presence from Iran. In other words, we were back to square one.

Since then, there has been the death of the Ayatollah. Contrary to some pessimistic predictions, the situation in Iran has not deteriorated as some thought that it would. There is probably an intense power struggle going on, but there are strong signs that Mr. Speaker Rafsanjani may emerge as the new president with executive powers, including power of co-ordination of the various sectors and groupings. If this is the case, and he decides to follow a more pragmatic approach, including a desire for better relationships with the West and the United Kingdom, I hope that the Foreign Office will not pursue an unnecessarily cautious line. Iran is a regional power occupying an important geographical position. It has considerable economic potential and we must not forget the implications of our overall relationship with Iran in the context of the three British hostages held in Beirut and Mr. Roger Cooper, in gaol in Tehran.

Earlier this year, I became a little more optimistic about the overall situation in the middle east. Since the cessation of hostilities between Iran and Iraq, this peace has held, although it is a little fragile at times. In doing so, it has removed a major source of instability in the region. Egypt now enjoys a much better relationship with its Arab neighbours—a crucial factor in the jigsaw. The Soviet Union under Mr. Gorbachev has shown its willingness to undertake a more constructive role. Finally, the United States at least appears to have accepted—perhaps reluctantly—the principle that an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations might provide the most appropriate framework for negotiations to take place between the interested parties.

It is worth reminding ourselves of the objectives of any peace negotiations involving Israel and the Arab world, and the Palestinians in particular. A declaration at the recent Madrid summit confirmed the policy of the Twelve in respect of the middle east conflict, as defined in the Venice declaration. It includes, rightly, the upholding of the right to security of all states in the region, including Israel, and the right to live in secure, recognised and guaranteed frontiers. It also——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is encroaching on the time of other hon. Members.

12.9 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): We would like to debate many issues, one being the issue of Cambodia where there is a great threat and a great fear that the Khmer Rouge may once again inflict terror. I hope that the Minister will let us know how the Government view the Khmer Rouge and whether they stick by their proposition that it should have no future part to play in Cambodia.

I shall devote most of my speech to southern Africa, because there is some optimism that there might be peace and stability in that region. In Angola, there appears to be some rapprochement between the MPLA Government and UNITA. If the United States and South Africa have finally withdrawn their military, financial and strategic support for UNITA, there is some possibility of progress. The same is true in Mozambique, where there is a possibility of discussions between the Frelimo Government and the MNR. The key is that the South Africans must totally withdraw their support. In Namibia, the independence process is under way, and we are all hopeful that there will be independence under resolution 435.

There are still major concerns which are shared by the United Nations, the Security Council, and even by the Government, that intimidation is still being carried out by the South Africa Kovoet forces. More ominously, there are now reports of UNITA personnel acting with Kovoet and harassing and intimidating people in northern Namibia. The Government must look closely at that and investigate it to make sure that the situation is cleared up.

The current mood over South Africa is optimistic. I know of no other oppressive regime that has more defenders and more apologists. I know of no other such country that has been given more chances. No other repressive regime has had more money directed to it in order to allow it to continue in its wicked ways. The investment is made under the pretext that more investment will bring about change. People who believe that are naive enough to believe that if a tiger is fed more and more meat, one day it will turn into a vegetarian.

Whenever there is an element of change, it is met with euphoric headlines. The big bang of change is said to be upon us. We had P. W. Botha's crossing-the-Rubicon speech, and now we have the five-year plan put forward by F. W. de Klerk. Any objective examination of that reveals it to be a most disappointing document. It does not even begin to measure up to the challenge of a free and democratic non-racial South Africa. The truth is that F. W. de Klerk is nothing more than a P. W. Botha clone. The face presented to the West is genial, and the words are honeyed and sweet, but the face looking inwards to the republic is the stern face of harsh repression. It is the continued state of emergency and the continuing killing and the banning of all legitimate political activity. It is state terror and oppression, and there is now the new terror of paramilitary oppression and the assassination of anti-apartheid activists.

Nothing so far in South Africa shows any sign of real progress. The five-year plan forms the basis of the National party's manifesto. Yesterday, I had a discussion on the radio with the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), who sought to excuse the paucity of ideas by saying that the leader of the National party was only the President-in-waiting and not the President. People say that, because of that five-year programme, major change is on the way. For greater accuracy, the Library got a copy from the South African embassy. It says:

> "The National party will, within the next five years . . . seek agreement among leaders on a more just and meaningful basis on which groups may be defined for political participation;".

What on earth does that mean? The only clue that we have is from a National party MP called Boy Geldenhuys. He said that apartheid is now being replaced by differentiation. That is playing with words, and is absolute nonsense.

The only way to make real progress is for South Africa to accept that there is only one group on which it can base integration and a truly democratic society. South Africans, irrespective of race, class, creed or colour must be allowed to participate, and that is the only way forward. If South Africa would take that bold step, we could begin to see the binding together of the nation. Apartheid cannot be modified, reformed, or adapted; it must be changed.

People say that meaningful negotiations are in prospect. Everyone who has taken an interest in South Africa for many decades wants a negotiated and peaceful settlement. No one says that there should be any other way. If there are to be proper and meaningful discussions, some pre-conditions must be met. Those have been made clear many times to the British Government. On Wednesday, they were made clear to the Prime Minister when she met Mrs. Albertina Sisulu and representatives of the United Democratic Front. I welcomed that meeting, and I hope that during it the Prime Minister learned some humility from their demeanour, their intelligence and the way in which the United Democratic Front is approaching matters. She has much to learn.

The first pre-condition is that Nelson Mandela and all the other political prisoners in South Africa must be released unconditionally. The state of emergency must be lifted and all the banned organisations must be legalised. The restrictions on political freedom must be lifted, and there must be the right of free assembly and discussion. Above all, the military must be removed from the townships.

There has been much speculation about Nelson Mandela's meeting last weekend with P. W. Botha. The statement was issued second-hand, and it is a pity that Mr. Mandela cannot make a public statement himself. He has made it clear that the people of South Africa must be properly engaged in the process of negotiation. Settlement cannot be imposed by the white-dominated Government. He has made it clear that the African National Congress and the UDF and all the other parties must be involved in the discussions.

Mr. Anderson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hughes: No, I have only 10 minutes.

How can we influence events from outside? External pressure is important and forms part of the struggle of people in South Africa. There must be more pressure because South Africa does not shift without pressure. Anyone who believes that the Namibian settlement was reached because the South Africans suddenly changed their minds, has never looked at realities. South Africa decided to move on resolution 435 because of the cost of military pressure. In a sense, it is the Vietnam syndrome. White conscripts were sent back with limbs missing, or otherwise badly injured and sometimes in coffins, and that made the white South Africans realise the price that they

[Mr. Hughes]

were paying. The economic and military pressure has made them change. F. W. de Klerk's visit to Britain had nothing to do with promoting the five-year plan. It had to do with defending South Africa's economy, which is in major difficulties. It faces debt rescheduling and problems about overseas debt repayments.

The apologists for South Africans say that sanctions play no part, but the facts prove otherwise. The five-year plan makes, that pefectly clear when it says:

"Adversities such as the worst drought in living memory, a prolonged slump in the gold price and the most vicious international attempt—over more than two decades—to destroy the South African economy by boycotts, sanctions and disinvestment, having strained the economy of the country and of every business and household."

There we have it, from the horse's mouth. Sanctions are having an effect, are important, and must continue to be imposed.

The whole of southern Africa is an area of immense riches in material and people, and the time for it to be developed in the interests of its people is long overdue. If only people would recognise the great promise that it holds for the future and the fact that the African National Congress, the United Democratic Front and all the people who stand for free and truly democratic non-racial society should be accepted as partners and equals, the enormous potential of that area could be enjoyed by all its people.

12.19 pm

Mr. George Gardiner (Reigate): When my right hon. Friend the Minister of State opened the debate she rightly drew our attention to political changes of a kind that few of us dared to pray for and that are occurring in many countries and continents, most notably in central and eastern Europe. I was glad that she devoted part of her speech to developments in southern Africa because immense changes are taking place there, too.

I do not share the view of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes). I believe that never has the opportunity to resolve conflicts across the troubled continent of Africa been greater than today. The starting point was almost certainly President Gorbachev's recognition that promoting the armed struggle with Soviet arms, funds and advisers represented far too great a drain on the Soviet economy, and that without increasing the effort by at least 10 times it could achieve nothing. The effect of this has been to stimulate a sort of peaceful revolution stretching across a continent.

In Angola this revolution has led to an agreed withdrawal of Cuban and South Africa troops and to warnings to the Marxist MPLA that Soviet support cannot continue. That has led to a cautious rapprochement with Dr. Savimbi's UNITA. In Namibia it has led to Cuban and South African withdrawal and elections in November under United Nations supervision to elect a constituent assembly which will draw up a constitution.

In Mozambique the peaceful revolution has enabled friendly relations to be restored with South Africa and the chance of reconciliation between the Marxist Frelimo Government and the RENAMO rebels. All this has had a potent effect on opinion, especially white opinion, in South Africa. The ruling National party under Mr. de Klerk is now entering an election on a programme promising an end to white domination, open-ended talks with black leaders on a power-sharing constitution and moving to abolish apartheid.

Another significant factor has come into play. The deputy Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union has warned the ANC through Oliver Tambo that it must think of laying down arms and adopting a negotiating posture. That will make the release of Nelson Mandela politically possible and pave the way for him to make a constructive contribution alongside Chief Buthelezi and other acknowledged leaders to what will undoubtedly be a long negotiating process.

All these factors represent recognitions of reality—that the days of the armed struggle are over and that far more can be achieved through reconciliation. I hope that we in the West can cut away from many of our former prejudices and recognise changing reality, too.

I welcome my right hon. Friend's words on Namibia. Despite SWAPO's pre-emptive invasion earlier this year, we are now back on track to a peaceful settlement and SWAPO is returning without arms, as agreed in the first place. I urge the Government to use all their influence to ensure that the campaign for the elections in November is fair and open and that the democratic parties are not placed at a disadvantage.

There is undoubtedly anxiety about the situation in the camps for returning refugees. Many are administered by the Council of Churches in Namibia, which makes no secret of its open support for SWAPO. The CCN is still denying the SWAPO-Democrats, led by Andreas Shipanga, access to their members in these camps. It is essential for the election that all parties have access to all voters.

There are also worries about the preponderance of international aid going to SWAPO as that creates an unhealthy situation and an open invitation to corruption and bribery. There is, too, a continual flood of propaganda from Radio Zambia in favour of SWAPO.

I concede that there appear to be two sides to SWAPO. There are some in the organisation who want to let bygones be bygones and who speak of national reconciliation; but there is also a darker side, witnessed by refugees returning to Namibia, who tell of torture, rape and murder in SWAPO detention camps. SWAPO has asserted that if it receives a two thirds majority in the constitutional assembly it will impose a one-party state. That is not in the interests of Namibia or of the region. We need only look at other one-party African states, such as Zambia, to see how disastrous it would be. There needs to be open democracy in which SWAPO comes to terms with the other parties and, in fairness, the other parties come to terms with it.

My right hon. Friend had some constructive words to say about South Africa. Anyone who has visited it this year, as I have, and spoken to the new generations of Ministers, to opinion formers of the Afrikaans press and to a wide number of opinion leaders outside Parliament, must be convinced that a real window of opportunity for reform is opening up. I cannot share the dismal and negative attitude of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North. That the National party can go into an election with such proposals, together with hints of Mandela's imminent release, is highly significant.

The whites in South Africa are coming up against reality, too. They are recognising the futility of trying to rule 20 million blacks who have no constitutional rights at

national level yet who command growing economic power. Reality has caught up with black activists in the townships, too. Gone is the dream of three years ago that a wave of riots and strikes could topple the whites from power. Nor is there any illusion that economic sanctions will do the trick. Countless independently conducted opinion polls of recent months bear that out.

There is also a quiet revolution in the workplace. In the coal industry I watched black apprentices training side by side with whites for skilled jobs once reserved for whites, and at identical rates of pay. The greatest advance of blacks is seen in the economic clout that they have won for themselves. They command increasing purchasing power. Their minibuses are the fastest growing industry, followed by street trading. Small provisions shops are run from side rooms, and building materials are sold from back yards. I happily pay tribute to the work of the British embassy in diverting British funds into the squatter camps and into the townships, thereby getting the smallest of businesses going. Sewing machines for women, for instance, enable them to make dresses and contribute greatly to uplifting the blacks in these areas.

All these things increase employment, and black economic power is paving the way for political power. The entrepreneurs are achieving where the rioters failed.

Those developments underline the new mood of hope in South Africa. The old wind of change is blowing again. I urge the Government and Prime Minister to use all their influence to persuade other nations to help it on its way and to offer full encouragement to the reformers from all races in that country.

12.28 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) has already spoken about the plight of the Kurds in Iraq. I have a list of towns and settlements that the Iraqi Government have already depopulated or are in the process of depopulating. They are deporting at least 100,000 Kurds from the north of the country to the south, from a fertile area where they have farmed for generations to an arid area, in most instances, where they will be unable to continue with their agricultural settlements.

The deportation of Kurds has been continuing for a long time. The Iraqi regime has refused access to all international observers, both diplomatic and journalistic. Earlier in the year when, on behalf of the Campaign Against the Repression of Democratic Rights in Iraq, I went with some of my colleagues to see the Iraqi ambassador, he offered us a trip to a cultural festival in Baghdad. We said that we would be interested to go to Iraq but we explained that we wished to see the Kurdistan and not merely a cultural festival. For several months the ambassador played a cat-and-mouse game with us by sending telexes to Baghdad, receiving replies to the effect that the authorities were not happy for us to go to certain areas, and suggesting an alternative programme. The upshot is that none of us has been allowed to go to Kurdistan. We can draw our own conclusions from that.

Against that background, it is obvious that there are not many details of how many Kurds have been evicted from their historic towns, which towns have been affected and to where Kurds have been sent. I stress that it is said that at least 100,000 have been involved. The Iraqi Government claim that the operation has been carried out for border security reasons. There is no evidence, however, that the Iraqi Government intend to evict border populations along the Arab part of Iraq's frontiers. Instead, the operation is aimed at the Kurdish people, and is the latest campaign in the long and bloody war of genocide that the Iraqi Government have waged against their Kurdish people and the opposition movement. Even the Iraq-Iran war did not prevent the Iraqi regime from pursuing its internal war against its own people.

More than 4,000 Kurdish villages have been razed to the ground since 1975. Massacres and evictions have been taking place since then. Many areas have been depopulated. Their inhabitants have been moved to so-called modern villages. The zones that have been depopulated have been declared security zones and an order has been issued that any human or animal found within them shall be shot dead on sight.

The attacks on the Kurds took a sinister turn in 1987 when chemical weapons were used for the first time. The attacks continued throughout that year with no comment by the international community, to its eternal shame. In March 1988, the Kurdish town of Halabja was bombed with canisters containing mustard and nerve gases and 5,000 civilians were killed. In August 1988, after the cease fire in the gulf war with Iran, a large military offensive was launched in Kurdistan in which chemical weapons were used on a mass scale, with the result that thousands more were massacred. More than 100,000 Kurds fled for their lives across the border to Turkey and Iran. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton said, many of them are living in appalling conditions. The regime has announced a number of amnesties for those whom it has deported, but few have taken those very seriously. We are told that those who took up the offers were later either imprisoned or redeported.

Large areas of Kurdistan lie empty. Villages have disappeared. Kurds have been scattered in camps and prisons throughout Iraq. This is not an internal matter; it is a humanitarian issue of international concern.

I shall refer to recent developments concerning human rights. In August 1988 there was a decree that gave Ba'ath party local organisations the right to pass the death penalty on those suspected of desertion and the right to execute on the spot. They can bypass both military and civilian courts. In February of this year, Amnesty International published a major report on the torture and murder of children in Iraq. Children are held hostage to force relatives to "confess" or to give themselves up. Victims are often as young as five-month-old babies.

In April, the regime held phoney elections for a national assembly that has no legislative power. The regime is all the time attempting to improve its image to the world.

I shall deal briefly with economic ties with Britain. To the extent that we can influence events in Iraq, I think that we should consider carefully our economic ties with the regime. Iraq's economy has been shattered by the war. Its reserves are spent and it is crippled by foreign debt. It desperately needs loans and easy credit so that it can trade. The regime wants to continue to spend large sums on the military and it is interested in developing its own military industry. Despite the ever-continuing violations of human rights in Iraq and the growing scale of the violations, Britain has maintained easy term credit for Iraq. When I asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster about trade links, he said that we have export credit

[Mrs. Ann Clwyd]

arrangements with Iraq that amount to £340 million. It is disgraceful that those record export credit loans should have been agreed at this time.

Several trade missions have been sent to Iraq. The Department of Trade and Industry sponsored four up to May this year—the British Water Industries Group, the Engineering Industries Association, the Association of British Healthcare Industries and the British Electro-technical and Allied Manufacturers Association. There have been three missions from the Nottingham, Coventry and Manchester chambers of commerce. When I asked the Department what briefings were given to those trade missions before they went to Iraq, I was told that they concentrated on commercial relations and aspects of doing business in that country. Apparently, no briefing is given on violations of human rights. That is disgraceful.

The Government should link those credits with an end to human rights violations. They should ensure that no deal is struck to help Iraq to develop its own military industry. We must try to prevent British Aerospace selling Hawk trainer jets to the regime. We must not forget the importance of the air force to the Iraqi regime—the same air force that attacked Gulf shipping with Exocet missiles during the war of the tankers, the same air force that dropped mustard and nerve gas shells all over Kurdistan. I ask the Minister to deal with those matters today and to assure us that the Government will review their policy in the light of the continuing human rights violations in Iraq.

I wish briefly to touch upon the subject of Cambodia, a country in which I have a great interest. Unfortunately, there is not a great deal of time available to do so. Once again I appeal to the Minister. There is about to be a settlement of the Cambodian problem, and it is essential that it excludes the Khmer Rouge. For the Khmer Rouge to be given official status within Cambodia would be equivalent to inviting Hitler and the Nazis to return to Germany and to give them a position of importance.

I ask the Government to spell out their policy on the Khmer Rouge. I hope that they will take an active part in the Paris conference. I ask them to deplore the fact that the Khmer Rouge is still sitting at the United Nations as part of the Cambodian delegation, something to which this country acquiesced. The people of Cambodia, who have suffered so much, would regard it as a positive step if the Government were to withdraw their recognition of the Khmer Rouge at the United Nations.

Above all, I ask the Government to give Cambodia the aid that it will need when the Vietnamese pull out at the end of September. That country has suffered so much and we have done so little to help it. We will have our opportunity to do so in September.

12.37 pm

Sir Dennis Walters (Westbury): Yesterday the House debated Hong Kong and the need for Britain to do all in its power to ensure the safety of Hong Kong's inhabitants when they lose the protection of British rule. People in this country feel a moral responsibility towards the Hong Kong people and it is right that we should consider all the options that might help them. Yet nothing could be worse than to make a promise now and then to cut and run when the time comes to redeem it. That is what we did to the Palestinians, as I shall remind the House during my brief speech.

Fifty years ago, there was uncertainty about Britain's intentions in Palestine; the British Government published a very solemn undertaking:

> "His Majesty's government therefore now declare unequivocally that it is not part of their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish state. They would indeed regard it as contrary to their obligations to the Arabs under the Mandate, as well as to the assurances which have been given to the Arab people in the past, that the Arab population of Palestine should be made the subject of a Jewish state against their will."

If the Palestinians had known that the British would let them down, they might have handled their case differently —we cannot tell. Whatever might or might not have been done, it is certain that the outcome would not have been worse for the Palestinians—every one of whom is now living in exile or under Israeli military occupation.

We should never forget our responsibilities for the Palestinian tragedy, which should form the background to our thinking when we examine British policy today and reflect on whether we are doing enough at this important time, when action aimed at making progress towards peace is possible. President Reagan and Mr. Shultz were totally committed to Israel, regardless of western interests and irrespective of international law, justice and morality. President Bush and Mr. Baker are not. They take a more balanced view. But for the situation to change not only in theory but practice, President Bush's Administration must do more than make even-handed statements. It must act firmly and speedily in making it clear to Israel that no longer can it get away with flouting international law and successive United Nations resolutions, and at the same time benefit from American economic aid and unconditional support.

By accepting United Nations resolutions 242 and 338, and by rejecting the use of violence, Chairman Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organisation adopted the policy that successive British Governments and Western Governments continually urged upon them. That was a statesmanlike decision, especially bearing in mind the horrors of Israeli repression on the West Bank and Gaza. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) seemed to advance the extraordinary proposition that, if brutality and repression is carried out by an elected majority, it is somehow better than if carried out by a dictatorship. In fact, it is more repellent.

Very little has happened since the PLO's statements and concessions. The Israeli response was almost wholly negative, contemptuous and dismissive. Admittedly, at long last a dialogue has started between the Americans and the PLO, but so far that significant development has not achieved much. Also, Shamir was shamed into making some response, and produced half-baked proposals to hold elections. During the several months that we have been discussing the form that those elections should take, Israeli repression has continued unabated, and racist Jewish settlers on the West Bank, acting as agents provocateurs, have stepped up the shooting and killing of Palestinian men, women and children, with little effort being made to restrain them. Meanwhile, Shamir admitted, when speaking privately to his own party supporters, that the whole election idea was a gimmick.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Why does not Arafat call off the intifada? Then there would be less bloodshed.

Sir Dennis Walters: My hon. and learned Friend must make his own speech in due course.

Shamir admitted that the election gimmick was designed to buy time and was never intended to be a serious initiative. Sharon's antics have since brought out into the open the fraud that had already been admitted in private.

Where do we go from here? The European Community, with Britain taking the lead instead of lagging behind, should nudge the American Administration into action. The first step should be an international conference with the participation of the parties to the conflict, naturally including the PLO, the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France. I was glad to learn that Mr. Baker is beginning to look upon that proposal with some favour.

From there, we should explore the possibility of a transitional period of autonomy on the West Bank and Gaza. Twenty one years have passed and the landscape of the population is quite different from what it was when the draftsmen of United Nations resolution 242 envisaged a restoration of the status quo ante of June 1967. The Israelis are unlikely to countenance conventional United Nations peace-keeping, either now, to relieve Palestinian suffering, or in a transition arising out of negotiations. Should we not therefore explore with the Americans building on the Venice commitment to participate in "guarantees on the ground", the possibility of a non-United Nations force, perhaps including themselves and the European Community? I realise that the multinational force in Beirut is not the happiest of precedents but the multinational force and observers in Sinai is. The assumption must be that all the parties want a peaceful settlement. That was true in the case of Egypt and Israel but not in Lebanon in 1982 and 1983.

I do not believe in the good intentions of the present Israeli Government, and the lack of them has been comprehensively demonstrated, as has their de facto rejection of resolutions 242 and 338. However, there are people in Israel with good intentions who, unlike Mr. Shamir, Mr. Arens and Mr. Sharon, are willing to abide by those crucial resolutions and would like to talk to the PLO and reach an acceptable peace settlement. This is the time for them to show their colours, and I hope that the Labour party there will do so. It would help if serious pressure was applied on Mr. Shamir by the Americans and Europeans, and now is the right time to apply it.

As a minor and obvious step, we should upgrade PLO diplomatic representation. I was pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary met Mr. Bassam Abu Sharif yesterday. He should meet Mr. Arafat soon and I hope that that will be arranged. President Mitterrand and France are well ahead of us.

For reasons of history and self-interest, and in order to prevent the possibility of a future disastrous war in the middle east, Britain should be in the vanguard, promoting actions and initiatives to resolve the conflict and trying to bring peace to the middle east. I urge the Government to be bolder and more far-sighted, for there is an opportunity and an opening now and it should not be missed.

12.47 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): We do not often get an opportunity to have a go at Foreign Office Ministers in this place; hon. Members have already mentioned the infrequency of foreign affairs debates. We can get at all the other Departments but not the Foreign Office, and now it has chosen a Friday to hold this debate. This is our opportunity to get stuck in to Foreign Office Ministers and find out what they intend to do about the issues that they are neglecting.

Most hon. Members have an interest in one particular country, and my interest is Cyprus. I was disgusted that the Minister of State did not mention Cyprus when she opened the debate. Given the difficulties and problems facing that beautiful island, something could have been said, especially bearing in mind the work that has been done outside the British Government. The Government have sat on their hands, and they must get off them. They have to get stuck in and do something.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) made a first-class contribution for the Opposition to show where this nation stands in foreign affairs. Since 1979, we have gone downhill, and we will go further downhill until the next election, when Opposition Members will be on the Government side and will do something about the problem.

My hon. Friend mentioned the way in which the Prime Minister goes about her job. She flits here, she flits there, she flits every damn where, but she does not like to flit to Europe because of what happens there and the opinions expressed about the British Government. I do not want to waste my time. I want to refer to Cyprus. The Minister can take the grin off his face. That applies also to his Parliamentary Private Secretary behind him, the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell). This is a serious matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) told me not long ago that his father said that all the wise men come from Swansea, East. I believe that, because he advises me wisely on Cyprus. A chappie in the high commission in London, Mr. George Allis also feeds me information on what is going on in Cyprus. What do we hear from that lot on the Treasury Bench? Not very much, unless we go down on our hands and knees to ask them exactly what is happening.

I am thankful, too, for what is happening in the United Nations. The Secretary General certainly set his stall out about what should be happening on that divided island. I have visited the island—not very often; I cannot afford to go there often. Many hon. Members can fly out of Heathrow. I accused the Secretary of State for Energy of doing that the other day, because I have a problem about energy and I could not get hold of him. I suggested that the Leader of the House should go to Heathrow and grab him one day before he goes and bring him here so that I can give him a going over. I hope to give the Minister a going over about Cyprus.

We want some answers. We want to know what the Government are doing, bearing in mind that many people outside the United Kingdom are working like mad to try to sort out the problem.

There was the invasion of 1974. Troops poured into Cyprus from the mainland of Turkey. I am particularly interested in Cyprus, and I am sick of asking the Foreign Secretary about the missing people. More than 1,600

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people from the north of that island went missing when the invasion took place. We do not know where they are. It is the Minister's responsibility, on behalf of the United Kingdom Government. Here is another Member who continually asks, "Where are the 1,600 people?" If Denktash can be invited to speak to the Prime Minister, surely she can ask him where they are. The Minister should get the message and have a word with the Prime Minister so that, next time she sees this Denktash fellow, she can ask him where those people from the north are.

We have a real problem with Cyprus. Many hon. Members are showing their concern about what should happen. My responsibility is to stand here and tell the Government what the Opposition feel about them. *[Interruption.]* Yes, at our annual conference only last year we discussed the problem of Cyprus. What do we get from the Conservative party conference? Not a word about Cyprus. What do we get in the House of Commons? Not a word about Cyprus. The Government could not care less. All they are bothered about are pounds and pence. That is all that is behind their policies. That is why the people denied them all those seats in Europe. My hon. Friend was correct. The people of this nation have had a bellyfull. *[Interruption.]*

That Whip, the Comptroller of Her Majesty's Household, the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), has just walked in from the Whips Office because he saw my name appear on the monitor. He is now bawling from his seat. A Whip should behave himself. I always do. I speak when I am invited to do so by the Chair. I respect the Chair at all times. When I am sat down doing the Whip's job, I keep my mouth closed. The hon. Gentleman has just come in from the Whips Office and now he has his mouth wide open.

The Comptroller of Her Majesty's Household (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones) *rose——*

Mr. Haynes: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. The hon. Gentleman has come into the Chamber to be educated about foreign affairs, particularly about Cyprus.

I want to know what the Government intend to do about that island. After the next election I shall not be here. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Before I leave this place I want a settlement in Cyprus. It has a marvellous president. He sweeps clean, like a broom. He is a breath of fresh air. He is saying all the right things. The other side is listening to his suggestions. I have promised to have lunch or dinner with him in Kyrenia after the problem has been sorted out, so get stuck in, Minister.

We want action by the United Kingdom Government. We do not get much action on foreign affairs because we are rarely given the opportunity in this Chamber to question Foreign Office Ministers. I often have a word with the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) outside the Chamber about foreign affairs, but I want him to tell us today exactly where the Government stand on Cyprus and what they intend to do to settle the argument so that Cyprus can be peaceful, with the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots living peacefully together, as they ought to do. Then we should all be welcome in Cyprus.

12.55 pm

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I do not intend to follow the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) on the theme of Cyprus, but I recall that when the Turkish forces landed in Cyprus a Labour Government were in power under Lord Wilson, as he now is. The hon. Member for Ashfield ought to ask Lord Wilson what happened to those who are missing.

The Commonwealth has not yet been referred to in this important foreign affairs debate. It is a remarkable institution. It consists of a great variety of nations that hold many different views. It is held together as an institution by Great Britain. That common thread has helped it through difficult times. It is now stronger and more able to perform a constructive role.

I pay full tribute to the outstanding leadership, hard work and dedication of the Queen who, as Head of the Commonwealth, has done so much to hold the Commonwealth together. All the members of the royal family are conscious of the importance of the Commonwealth. They spend a great deal of time visiting Commonwealth countries, which I am sure helps to bind the Commonwealth together. I am delighted that Pakistan is to rejoin the Commonwealth. It will be most warmly received at the Prime Minister's conference in Kuala Lumpur.

I praise the work that is done by the Commonwealth, but much more could be done, particularly to improve the environment and protect the rain forests. The Commonwealth can also help to improve democracy. We are always trying to find ways to improve our own democratic institution. It is a hard enough task to make changes here. But it is important that younger democracies should have the advantage of connections with officers of this House. The connections between those officers and the officers of the various Commonwealth legislatures need to be extended wherever possible.

The Commonwealth has had its fair share of famine and poverty. We should do all that we can to improve the way in which we tackle poverty and famine throughout the Commonwealth. Nothing is of greater importance than protecting the health of populations by means of new methods of health care. Education is of the utmost importance, too. Student exchanges with Commonwealth countries play a major role in creating stable democratic institutions and in binding together the Commonwealth as a whole.

I turn now to the role of the Commonwealth in the problems that we are facing in Hong Kong. I praise the speech made by my right hon. and learned Friend yesterday, following his courageous visit to Hong Kong. That colony has been through—and is still going through—the most colossal emotional turmoil. To a certain extent, logic, reason and patience are overridden by the instant frenzy and anxiety that has taken over as a result of what happened in China.

It is important that we act as soon as possible to try to give as great a reassurance as we can to Hong Kong while the horrible memories of what happened in China are fresh in people's minds. I am sure that those memories will remain in people's minds but I believe that it is in the immediate future that we have an obligation to try to find a way of giving the citizens of Hong Kong the insurance of rights of abode if in 1997 the situation was such that they wished to leave that beleaguered colony.

Although I believe that there could be changes in China in the intervening period, we must work to undertake the obligation to provide that insurance. Through its collective discussions the Commonwealth can draw the attention of each and every member of the Commonwealth to the part that it should play in giving a pledge and creating that necessary insurance.

There will, of course, be discussions on this in the European Community and in the United Nations, and I welcome both. However, I hope that the Commonwealth will be able to do something constructive and positive. I do not under-estimate the great difficulties in doing that, but we must focus our attention on the fact that we are asking for a pledge for each member country to take a proportion of people from Hong Kong by giving them a right of abode in the event of the Armageddon scenario.

In my view, we are not going to suggest—nor should we suggest—that a right of abode should be granted to all Hong Kong citizens ahead of 1997. The way forward is to suggest that through the machinery, which I hope will be set up within the Commonwealth with possibly a group of other nations which are prepared to take in people, the necessary documentation can be issued accepting requests for a right of abode within agreed quotas. Only in the run-up to 1997—possibly in 1996—should those requests for a right of abode which have been made and documented then enable the individual concerned to obtain the right of abode guaranteed by the request document.

Individual countries would have to decide for themselves how to evolve the selection procedure. It is not for us to dictate to other countries that might be good enough to take Hong Kong residents in the Armaggedon scenario exactly how they should undertake the selection procedure. However, in each of those intakes, I believe that there should be a ballot for part of the intake to ensure that there is an element without discrimination. If the procedure were over-subscribed, the ballot would mean that there was always a chance for some of the people involved being accepted without discrimination.

If we can bring about those provisions, they would ensure that, by their actions, the Chinese Government would have to persuade the people of Hong Kong that their safety and future could be safeguarded; otherwise, China would be faced with the humiliation of a mass excursion of people from Hong Kong in the run-up to 1997.

I am convinced that it is in the interests of the people of Hong Kong to remain in Hong Kong for the time being, until 1997 at least. I am also convinced that it is in the interests of China to ensure that Hong Kong continues to flourish, because that is the major way in which Hong Kong can be of use to China's economy. I hope, therefore, that, through the continuing dialogue with China, we will build on the Sino-British agreement. I hope that we will go forward to a better future for Hong Kong in the light of that discussion.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. It will be evident to the House that many hon. Members still wish to speak. The two Front-Bench speakers hope to catch my eye at 1.45 pm. I am grateful to hon. members who are co-operating so well in making short speeches. I hope that there will be even shorter speeches from now on. In that way, it might be possible for every hon. Member who wishes to speak to do so.

1.5 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I suppose that the 200th anniversary of the French revolution is an appropriate time for the House of Commons to have a debate on foreign affairs. I am not surprised by the Prime Minister's remarks. What she said in France was inappropriate and rather impertinent. One wonders what would have been the position if, on a visit to this country, the President of France had started to pontificate on the events of 1642 or any other aspect of British history. In making those remarks about 1789, the Prime Minister certainly did not speak for the majority of the British people.

I agree with every word of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) about South Africa, about which I have spoken many times here. I shall not say more because I agree entirely with the sentiments of my hon. Friend's speech.

On the Arab-Israeli conflict, my view remains that the failure of Israel to show genuine willingness to start talking with the PLO about the future of the occupied territories —they are occupied territories in international law—plays into the hands of the worst kind of extremist and terrorist who completely rejects any kind of Israeli state. The sooner that Israel recognises that there is no meaningful alternative to talks with the mainstream of the Palestinian movement and that the West Bank does not belong to Israel, the sooner there will be a chance of peace. I have always supported Israel's right to exist, even before 1948 when I wanted that state to emerge. I do not know what more the PLO leadership can do at this stage to bring Israel to the negotiating table. I hope that, first and foremost, the United States will apply the pressure that must be applied on the Israeli leadership.

I want now to talk about the present events in eastern Europe. I welcome the substantial political changes in Hungary. Those changes are warmly welcomed by the Opposition. As long as I live, I am never likely to forget Sunday, 4 November 1956, when the uprising in Hungary was brutally crushed by Soviet troops. That was the second intervention. The first, in late October, sparked the uprising. I learnt about what had occurred not on the radio but a few yards from here. I was on the largest demonstration that I have ever been on, one organised by my party against the Suez adventure. Aneurin Bevan was the main speaker. Many of us felt so humiliated by what had happened and by the collusion with France and Israel that we continued to demonstrate until 7 o'clock or 8 o'clock in the evening. It was on that day that I, like others, learnt of what the Russians had done in Hungary —two crimes on the international scene at the same time.

I am also extremely pleased by the progress in Poland. The House last debated Poland as such on 22 December 1981, when Solidarity had been banned and martial law was imposed. I took part in the debate, and in the course of deploring those events I said that if genuine, free elections were held in Poland it was unlikely that the ruling party would receive more than about 5 per cent. of the vote. Bearing in mind what has happened in the at least limited free elections in Poland, I have not, I suppose, been proved wrong. I am pleased that Solidarity is again a legal

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force in Poland and is playing its legitimate part in the affairs of that country. I welcome those events, and I hope that they will lead to political progress in the rest of eastern Europe.

However, I am concerned that some western leaders, such as President Bush, can over-react. What is happening in Poland and Hungary is new in any country under Communist control. Any over-reaction could produce a backlash. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) was right today. The Soviet Union will not necessarily give up its empire, so all the talk about Communism being defeated and the ideas of western Europe dominating the rest could play into the hands of very conservative forces in the Soviet Union and the other countries concerned. There could be a backlash. When we consider what happened in the 1950s and the 1960s, and the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, we should be rather cautious and wary about making remarks and acting in a way that could play into the hands of those elements in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union that do not want to see political progress.

So much in eastern Europe depends on what happens in the Soviet Union itself. Does any hon. Member imagine that the changes that we can see in Poland and Hungary could have come about without the political changes in the Soviet Union itself since 1985? Could such progress have come about under the Brezhnev regime? The answer is obvious. To repeat the point I made in an intervention in the Minister's speech, if it is right that the countries of eastern Europe should be able to pursue their own policies, that should also be recognised in central and south America by the United States.

I remember what happened in Guatemala in 1954, and no one can argue that it is now a country where the rule of law exists. I remember only too well the coup encouraged in so many ways by the United States which overthrew the democratic Government in Chile in 1973 and the efforts to destroy or destabilise the current regime in Nicaragua. If it is right for eastern Europe that people should be able to decide their own future, that should apply equally in central and south America.

I am concerned that there has been no political progress in Czechoslovakia. We know, of course, that since the invasion in August 1968, the most conservative elements have been in control and that there has been continued repression. Czechoslovakia remains, if not a totalitarian dictatorship, a very authoritarian one in so many ways. I am not sure of the distinction between the two. I went to see the Czech ambassador by arrangement on 1 March to protest against the imprisonment of Václav Havel, the distinguished Czech playwright, who has since been released. The ambassador would not allow me to put my views, and I wondered why he had agreed to see me. I had not gone to the embassy to discuss my holiday plans in Czechoslovakia or the climate there, yet he refused to listen. It is unfortunate that there has been no political change in Czechoslovakia.

Alexander Dubcek campaigned for and tried to bring about change and reforms within the Communist structure in the first six to eight months of 1968. Such progress is happening elsewhere in eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union now. Mr. Dubcek was somewhat before his time, but it will be a happy occasion indeed when the people of Czechoslovakia have far more freedom than they have now.

All countries in Europe should be able to enjoy basic human rights and civil liberties. As I have said on other occasions, although not necessarily in the House, I hope that I shall live to see the day when there is not a single dictatorship in Europe. I hope that what I have always wished for will come about soon. Many of the dictatorships in western Europe have disappeared. Greece, Portugal and Spain all now have the rule of law and the democracy that we have been fortunate enough to enjoy for so long.

Democratic liberties are starting to appear in eastern Europe and that is not only good for those who live in those countries, who have as much right to enjoy freedom as we have, but for Europe as well. There will be far less tension and less possibility of an incident triggering an international crisis that could threaten international security and world peace. I hope that the progress that we have witnessed in eastern Europe, albeit on a limited scale, will continue because that will be a very good thing for the whole of Europe, east and west alike.

1.16 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I wish to speak on four subjects—the European Council in Madrid, development and the environment, growing out of debt and right of abode in view of events in China.

The European Council made some very serious decisions about the European monetary system and future arrangements for finance in Europe. Those matters have not so far been discussed in this Parliament, although they were recommended for debate on the Floor of the House by two Select Committees—the Select Committee on European Legislation and the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. They were not introduced for debate before the Madrid conference and they have not been debated since.

That leaves the House with a problem. We have a Government, elected from among Members of Parliament, who do not wish and will try to stop Parliament discussing matters connected with the European Council. Unless this national Parliament asserts its sovereignty over the Government, it will never be able to discuss or seriously influence policy matters for discussion at the European Council and other forums of the European Community. That leaves a serious democratic deficit in the Community. The House must consider how it can control its Ministers and influence the policy of the European Comunity. Either the House will have to address that subject or we shall have to find or invent different institutions through which we can control and influence democratic decisions made in Europe.

I welcome the initiative of the Minister for Overseas Development in going to Brazil and presenting a practical programme by which we can help people in Brazil to make a living by harvesting the forests without damaging them. That is perfectly possible, particularly in timber exploitation, if we allow the forest to regenerate. That means a system of management of the forest. Third-world countries, which do not have managerial and administrative skills at their fingertips need exactly that sort of assistance. Significantly, the Brazilians, who resent much of the criticism levelled at them by unthinking

environmentalists in this country, accept and will work with just the kind of assistance that we have offered. I congratulate the Government and the Minister for Overseas Development on the initiative.

It may have escaped the notice of many hon. Members that the conference held in the Grant Committee Room on 6 December last year, which was led by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has given birth to a book entitled "Growing Out Of Debt" produced by the all-party group on overseas development. In the introduction, ideas are put forward based on the contributions of international figures ranging from Mr. Cheysson of the Commission to our own Chancellor of the Exchequer and Senator Bradley of the United States.

We call for a new initiative to be led by Britain, following logically Britain's initiative on debt in Africa. The key point here is that the developing countries—the indebted countries—are paying massive sums in capital repayments and interest to the developed world. Any initiative must redress that flow. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer initiated the idea that we should forgive debt in Africa, recycle it and put in grant money. I am glad to see that Germany, Canada and the United States followed our example. As a result, there is now a positive flow into most Africa countries from all the efforts of the IMF and the World Bank. This has reversed international financial flows—Government flows—but has done nothing about investment by the private sector in Africa. Such investment is essential if those countries are to grow again and achieve a better standard of living, above the level of starvation that many African countries face. We must also reverse the flows in Latin America and other debtor countries, including eastern European countries such as Poland and Hungary.

We made a suggestion about a Government initiative, and this is being taken up by President Mitterrand with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in Paris today, so it is apposite to talk about it, particularly as the forthcoming IMF and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development meetings in Washington will have to follow up the Brady plan, which was almost stillborn. It has been discussed but nothing has been implemented since March this year. Many steps will have to be taken, such as reduction in debt, the issue of bonds, debt-equity swaps, and changing the economies of the indebted countries so that they are in a condition to grow, and are benign to inward investment and private investment. Debts must be reduced, interest rates must be reduced and the period over which debts are repaid elongated, until they reach a level of repayment per annum that the exports of the country can stand.

Furthermore, to make such economies attractive to private capital and to keep money in that country instead of taking it back overseas, we should permit the creditors to put the money into a local account in local currency. They should be asked to invest that money, with the help of local government and entrepreneurs, in industries that will grow and provide the foreign exchange that is necessary to repay debts. In this way, those debts will be kept in active accounts and will not have to be written off. Such a scheme would need an international guarantee power, and that should be formed by the IMF and the World Bank. The capital would never be called, but it would act as a guarantee of repayment for the private investor who puts his money or retains it in the under-developed country, in accordance with the agreement made for reinvestment and keeping the money in the local currency account.

In this way, we shall engage the abilities and the resources of private banks and private entrepreneurs, the IMF, the World Bank, Governments and local entrepreneurs, in trying to rebuild economies and recycle the money for the benefit of the country concerned and the banks themselves. Such an initiative will reverse the terrible outflow of money haemorrhaging from the developing world to the developed world, to the disadvantage of both.

I am a member of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and I want to say this to the people of Hong Kong who seek the right of abode here. The whole reason for trying to get the right of abode here is to restore confidence in the future of Hong Kong. That is the crucial objective of their seeking the right of abode here—it is a sort of insurance policy. We know that 60 per cent. of the people there will never come here—they have said so. The trouble is that it is an insurance policy which will not produce the confidence that is needed, particularly if, in practice, Britain cannot provide the right of abode for all people in Hong Kong.

Therefore, we must look for other confidence-building measures, and I have two to suggest. One is that advanced in the report of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee—that students who come here may be permitted to count their time as a student towards citizenship. The second is that we should reduce the amount of money that people must bring to invest here before they are permitted the right of abode. If that is combined with a serious effort to get guarantees from the international community to assist the Hong Kong people, should there be an Armageddon after 1997, and with the democracy proposals and additional safeguards that we are seeking from the Chinese, I believe that there should be a bright future for the people of Hong Kong. I suggest, and hope, that they abandon this pursuit of the impossible—the right of abode in this country.

1.25 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Bearing your guidance in mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall try to keep my comments to the absolute minimum.

In the forthcoming South African elections on 6 September, and with the new leader, Mr. de Klerk, we want quite clear guarantees that South Africa will take steps to end apartheid. When the Minister of State opened the debate, she gave us a list of certain items, but I know that it was by no means finite. The two chief things we must have as a sign of commitment to ending apartheid in South Africa are the ending of racial registration and the Group Areas Act. Those two pieces of legislation underpin apartheid, and until they are removed we will not see an end to that policy, which we want to be removed as speedily as possible.

I shall concentrate my remarks on Namibia, as I was there at the end of May and the early part of June. I therefore know how seriously concerned the people, particularly in northern Namibia, are about the absorption into the south-west African police force of former Koevoet forces.

We were in northern Namibia for only a few hours before we saw the large number of Casspir vehicles that

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constantly go along the main roads during the day. They were most threatening, intimidating and worrying to the people of Namibia. It was quite clear that the people were worried during the day, but at night, when the vehicles go off the main roads into the bush, and through the villages, they became terrified.

Unless the Koevoet forces are withdrawn completely —their former commander is now in charge of the police force in that area—the people cannot believe that they will be allowed to have a free and fair election.

I know that the Government have made their view known, but they have to continue to say on every possible occasion that we condemn the Koevoet force and that it must be completely off the scene if the process is to move forward peacefully.

In our short time there we saw five separate abuses of human rights. They were quite clear violations, all of them since 1 April. The worst incident involved young men who were forced to dig holes in the sand. They were buried head first until they were nearly suffocated, pulled out and beaten. The process was repeated time and again. It is that type of activity, which is still taking place, that gives rise to concern about genuine moves towards free and fair elections. Britain must ensure that it makes clear on every possible occasion to the United Nations special representative, Martti Ahtissarri, and the UN forces there that we shall give them our full support in their role in that country, which is to supervise and control free and fair elections. There is, of course, a great difference between the phrase "supervise and control" and the word "monitor". We have to ensure that everything possible is done to enable supervision and control to be carried out. If at any time assistance in election matters is sought, I hope that the Government will respond positively.

Farm workers form a large part of the electorate and political parties must have access to them. Each farm is marked on the map and as they are private lands there is restricted access. The Democratic Turnhalle Alliance is holding meetings and the farm owners are taking people to them. The hon. Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) spoke about SWAPO. Any evidence of bribery involving large sums of money which I saw while I was there showed that the DTA rather than SWAPO was the suspect. I hope that the Government will do everything possible to ensure people's access to all the political parties contesting the elections later this year.

South Africa is clearly creating some financial difficulties for Namibia. It is responsible for the financing of services until Namibia becomes independent, and we must ensure that it carries out that role. We must also do everything possible after independence to ensure that there are proper negotiations about outstanding debt. It would be totally wrong if Namibia were asked to take over the massive and crippling debt incurred by a Government in which the people of Namibia had no say. That is extremely important.

After independence we shall still have to consider the question of Walvis bay, which will be a problem for future negotiations. Major concessions have been made about the registration procedure for the election. We need to ensure that the procedures and regulations governing the election will ensure confidentiality so that people know that they can vote freely and fairly. Illiterate people must know exactly how to vote. They fear that if they cannot be assisted to vote in a confidential manner the secrecy of the ballot will be destroyed.

Namibia has a small electorate and any fiddling at the edges can affect the outcome of the results. A party or grouping needs to have 66⅔ per cent. of the vote in order to draw up a constitution, and for that reason the matters that I have mentioned are important. The Government must show that they want a free and fair election and they must back the United Nations 100 per cent. in ensuring that the election takes place in November and is free and fair. We all look forward to Namibia achieving its independence.

1.32 pm

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): I should like to explore the ground that lies before us after the Madrid summit. That was a good result for the United Kingdom and it was helpful that the Delors report was demoted from the status of the absolute truth and that we managed to neutralise the issue of British membership of the exchange rate mechanism—although both those gains are short term.

The agenda has not changed and the other states have not renounced the Delors goal of economic and monetary union. That means that there is a certain ambiguity at the heart of our relationships. The minimum, though in many respects sufficient, definition of monetary union must be an area of permanently fixed exchange rates with no exchange controls or other barriers to the free movement of capital or the circulation of currencies. For most of the other member states that remains the launch pad for further integration in the European Community. I am not sure whether at the moment the United Kingdom acknowledges that as the ultimate destination, although I was reassured to hear my right hon. Friend the Minister say that we should move as rapidly as possible to the first phase of Delors. I hope that that somewhat contradicts the idea that we were batting for beyond the next general election in the conditions that we laid down. We have bought time, not cancelled the difficult decisions. The important thing now in the short term is to ask how to use that time, and I should like to make two suggestions about that.

First, there is no need at the moment for another idelogical war over the principles of economic and monetary union. Secondly, our proposals, which we have promised, must not be so minimalist as to be insufficient to serve as a rallying point for those who may share some of our reticence about the full scope of the Delors report—the full scope of economic and monetary union. There are people who agree with many of our points, but we must offer them a flag behind which they can line up. If we are minimalist, they will not be able to do so because they will feel that we are not partaking of the ultimate goal.

I want to offer the Government two pieces of cautionary advice. First, it would be helpful if we did not so assiduously give the impression that we are desperately hoping that the liberalisation of exchange controls in France and Italy will lead to chaos. One cannot help but notice occasionally a suppressed anticipation that, with a bit of luck, that liberalisation will cause problems that will let us off the hook. We must be careful not to will that.

Secondly, I suggest that we need to be cautious about the canonisation of the president of the Bundesbank. He is

a non-elected official, and the political decisions in a democracy are taken ultimately by elected members of Government. Chancellor Kohl does not necessarily share the bank president's views, and it would help the latter if we did not pray him in aid so often as a supporter of our opinions.

I believe that the conditions for the United Kingdom membership of the exchange rate mechanism will be fulfilled—and rather earlier than we expect. There will be an intergovernmental conference in which we shall take part, and an insistence on a treaty change for which we would do well to prepare ourselves. We must be careful about the attitudes that we adopt. I vividly remember Ministers arguing several years ago that we did not need a treaty change to achieve the single market; we needed only the political will. It would be difficult to deny now that that treaty change has stimulated a much more accelerated approach to the whole notion of the single market.

I recognise and share the Government's dislike of much of the philosophy behind the social charter. It will return in a new form. At the summit in December there is likely to be a declaration geared to employment. There is unlikely to be a legislative programme as an integral part of the declaration, and that will mean measures emerging under the existing competences of the Commission, measures which we should bat as they come. We do not necessarily need to declare war on the whole idea, because legislation will come forward in a conventional form which we shall treat on its merits as it appears. Our priority must be to press forward with the internal market, particularly in the important areas of insurance and public procurement.

I also suggest that the Government be more willing to acknowledge the victories that we have had. I notice that press statements from the French cabinet note with satisfaction when a certain decision has been taken in Europe of which the French Government approve. We tend to go in for great publicity about the issues over which we find ourselves in conflict; we are rather less good about praising—without crying triumph—those that go our way. Examples that come to mind are the banking directive and the fact that Europe has not embarked on a protectionist course. There will be no fortress Europe, given the decisions taken over the past few months and years.

It would be helpful if the United Kingdom would acknowledge that we are still determining the agenda in many respects in the European Community. The triumphs that we have had and the consensus on certain issues should be the subject of just as much comment as the areas on which we find ourselves in opposition. I note with satisfaction that the Government do not object to the use of article 90 in the telecommunications proposals of the Commission. That does not flow from the Single European Act—it would be a mistake to regard all these matters as flowing from that. It is an article of the treaty and as such it shows that the treaty can be used directly to obtain the deregulatory, free-market objectives of the European Community. I hope that we shall not be too alert to the possibilities of objecting to article 90 when it is used in areas that we find somewhat inconvenient. I think that some of my hon. and right hon. Friends would merely say that in taking that approach we were being rather cleverly French. That is an argument to which I would not necessarily object.

It is unfortunate that we allow the impression to be gained that there is a perennial British problem in Europe. I suggest that there is also a French problem of a dirigiste tradition in adjusting to the internal market. There is also an Italian problem, which involves a history of non-implementation of regulations, about which the Italian Government propose to do nothing. Milk quotas do not yet exist in Italy. There is also a German problem that involves a highly protected financial services market. There will be traumatic events when the Germans come to dismantle that market. I resent the implication that Britain is always the one-man awkward squad in the Community. Sometimes we make ourselves appear to be the awkward squad when frequently we can argue legitimately that we are leading the field and setting the pace when it comes to issues that are important to us. We must not define Europe exclusively in terms of the things that we want. We must understand that other member states have legitimate reasons to define Europe from their point of view.

There are other issues that have a rather broader effect on the Community than those to which I have referred. A major economic problem that lies at the heart of the Community is the massive German perennial trade surplus. If we had a more balanced and more evenly distributed growth in Europe, there would be far less demand for a social charter, and certainly much less demand for vast regional and social funds, which are essentially mechanisms to recycle the German trade surplus.

I have some sneaking sympathy with the countries that look forward to a central European bank as a means of applying a slightly more reflationary philosophy than that which governs the German economic policy. Some advocates of the British membership of the exchange rate mechanism take that stance on the ground that effectively the president of the Bundesbank would be in charge of British economic policy. One can see the attraction of that if one's priority is to counter inflation. At the same time, German policy is not always conducted in the common interest. It is not healthy for there to be a permament structural imbalance at the heart of the Community's economic performance.

The French identify the same problems with Germany as we do. However, they have opted for the embrace rather than the admonition. It is true that Chancellor Kohl and Mr. Mitterrand have met on about 67 occasions. The French have opted for what might be described as a suffocating embrace. This has meant, however, that they are able to exercise an important influence on German policy. Sovereignty, as in the French definition, is national sovereignty, and applies to the direction in which the nation wishes to go. That reflects a national interest generally and not necessarily the rather narrower terms of parliamentary sovereignty, which I suspect is the way in which the debate will be focused in this place.

The Community will face a significant problem which it has barely begun to address in an era of much freer frontiers, and it will lie with immigration and sanctuary. There will be problems if, for example, the Tamils are accepted in Holland and rejected in Belgium, or if the Syrians are accepted in Belgium and rejected somewhere else. These difficulties will be important within the Community, and we must consider them carefully.

I welcome what my right hon. Friend the Minister of State said about the importance of the EFTA. We have much more trade with it than with the United States and Japan combined. We are spending too much time talking about the demise of the Soviet empire. I welcome the

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prospect, but I note from my history that institutions tend to survive for longer than external circumstances would suggest. EFTA is at the heart of Europe, and it is difficult to conceive of economic and monetary union with Switzerland or Austria—Switzerland has an especially important currency—outside the EFTA system. I hope that the United Kingdom, with its special relationships with the EFTA countries, will see that it has a leading role in trying to achieve closer relationships. I accept that some special status will have to be devised, at least until we have completed the European single market in 1992.

It is somewhat strange that the Opposition should claim to be the great new party of Europe. I recall our last debate when Labour's new, sparkling European policy was unveiled, only to be promptly assassinated by every Opposition Member who spoke. It is curious that we should be portrayed as the divided party and the Opposition as the united party when the opposite is true. We may be divided on certain ultimate goals, but we are not divided on the concept. That realisation has yet to dawn upon the Opposition.

1.45 pm

Mr. Corbyn: If an hon. Member is granted an Adjournment debate on a constituency matter, he can speak for about 15 minutes, so it is rather curious that only four minutes is being allowed for me to discuss the rest of the world. I shall make only two brief and simple points.

The Minister praised the Government for their work on environmental matters and claimed that they were the greenest Government in the world. She said that Britain was busy examining all the causes of world pollution and the various phenomena that go with it. That argument would be stronger if the Government had given a commitment yesterday, during the Committee stage of the Antarctic Minerals Bill, to declare the Antarctic a world environmental park rather than allowing the prospecting for minerals that will inevitably lead to the development of mining operations in the Antarctic and damage to the fragile ecosystem. The Opposition forced the Bill to be debated and to be sent to Standing Committee, and there will be another debate on Monday evening. I hope that people will understand our role in that.

The announcement earlier this week of the growth of emissions of carbon dioxide from British industry and British power stations makes Britain the country with the largest increase in the world. That comes at a time when the Prime Minister is lecturing people and saying that she is doing more than anyone to solve the problems of the greenhouse effect. It sits rather ill.

Likewise, although there is undoubtedly a genuine concern about rain forests, the reality is that many poor countries are being forced to chop down their rain forests and destroy their natural resources simply to repay overseas debts. There is an inextricable link between debt and the destruction of the environment. It is time that the British Government clearly recognised that. Market forces are a major cause of damage to the world's environment. We need a strengthened United Nations environmental protection agency and a different attitude from the Government towards the environment.

My hon. Friends the Members for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) mentioned the problems of the Kurdish people in Iraq. Kurdistan is a nation of almost 20 million people—the largest unrecognised nation in the world. The Kurds are one of the most abused peoples, and the treachery that has been meted out to them throughout the century is a standing disgrace, in respect of which all major Governments are, to some extent, guilty.

Many Kurdish refugees from Turkey have recently arrived in Britain. We have close relations with the Turkish Government and Turkey is a member of NATO. Indeed, the Turkish President was invited to Britain last year and was feted at enormous public expense. Will the Government make the strongest possible representations to the Turkish Government about their treatment of the Kurdish people in Turkey, about those people's legitimate desire for self-determination and about the conditions suffered by 120,000 Iraqi Kurdish refugees? They fled to Turkey not because of a humanitarian gesture from the Turkish Government, but because of the repression that they had suffered from the Iraqi Government.

Will the Government make representations to the Turkish Government to ensure access to the Kurdish camps at Mardin, Mus and Diyarbakir for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Red Cross and other respected bodies such as the International Medical Relief Foundation, which wants to examine the many examples of the poisoning of the Kurdish people by Iraqi agents. Did they not suffer enough in Iraq, with all the oppression, murder and use of chemical and other weapons against them? They were forced to flee to Turkey, only to find Iraqi agents in the refugee camps. Those people deserve something better, and the support of the rest of the world, in their attempts to live a just and peaceful life.

I hope that the British Government will stop pretending that everything is all right in Turkey and that that country is returning to democracy, and will instead expose the abuses of human rights in Turkey and its Government's oppression of the Kurds. We should not shut our eyes to those problems but should stand up for the rights of those poor, unfortunate people—as we would expect others to do for us if we were in a similar position.

1.49 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I will at least start on a note of consensus. If we are to pursue a realistic foreign policy, we must first know ourselves. We must evaluate our country's history, strengths, weaknesses and potential. Our history as a country in relation to external affairs since 1945 has been of a process of adjustment to the new role that we can play in the world. Central to that process have been developments within the European Community.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office concluded long ago that our future lies in a closer relationship with the new Europe. Until recently, British public opinion seemed to lag behind that view, but recent public opinion polls, notably that appearing in *The Daily Telegraph* and the recent Eurobarometer poll, suggest that it now recognises the value of that relationship.

The Prime Minister—the queen across the water—has had rather a bad day. It was the Prime Minister's failure to appreciate the sea change in public opinion, as evidenced by recent polls, that made her so misjudge her political stance on Europe. That is emphasised by her

insensitivity over the past few days in respect of the French revolution—an event that is fundamental to most French people, and to which they make obeisance. By her criticism, she allied herself in respect of France—as she has in the case of South Africa—with the old regime, rather than with the newly emerging forces.

The Prime Minister's formation ill suits her to understand the processes of change, and her temperament makes it difficult for her to co-operate with others. She still hankers after a special relationship with the United States that is no longer on offer, and still attempts to fan a narrow and unhealthy populism, with a much-reduced response. As the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) implied in his advice to the Prime Minister in his very wise speech, she should turn down the volume in respect not only of the European Community but of other areas of foreign policy.

The cross of Grantham must be one of the biggest burdens that Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers must bear. The two Ministers of State who are with us today are the partially acceptable face of a foreign policy that is directed more and more from Downing street in a strident and populist way—and in a misjudged populist way, because public opinion has changed. Rather like an old end-of-pier entertainer, the old appeals no longer receive quite the response that they enjoyed in the past.

By failing to recognise our strengths, the Prime Minister is failing to capitalise on our potential. Clearly there are few areas in which we can still play a solitary, unilateralist role. One is Hong Kong, on which we had a most valuable debate yesterday. Over the years, one has gained the impression that the Government's obsession with keeping on the right side of the People's Republic of China has led to distortions in our foreign policy on areas adjacent to China. One thinks of the policy on Tibet, and certainly that on Cambodia.

Another area is Argentina. Over the past few days, we have heard what may be construed as encouraging noises from Mr. Menem, the new President of Argentina, in relation to the Falklands. It will be helpful to know how the Government read those signals. It is clearly wrong that our relations are so strained with that great Latin American country. We cannot continue indefinitely in that immobilism. We need a more coherent position. The position that has been clearly adumbrated by my party is that it would be ready to open talks, without preconditions, with democratic Argentina on the future of the Falklands. That is also the view of the Foreign Office, which is seeking wherever possible to build bridges, but there is a vast road block—the No. 10 veto—across the way to closer relations between ourselves and Argentina.

Leaving aside Hong Kong and the Falklands which, in their own way, are a legacy of old colonial relationships, is it not quite clear that Britain's role in the future will increasingly be within our alliances? As my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) said with his usual force, global problems need global solutions. Working within our alliances involves a process of give and take and a series of compromises, not absolutes. We in Britain have a unique position in the world through our permanent position on the Security Council and our role within the Commonwealth and the European Community. Our aim should be to maximise our influence in those organisations in which the sum is greater than the part. Who can deny that, latterly, strident isolationism has reduced our strengths and is contrary to our national interests? Within the Security Council we pay tribute to some of the work that has been done. It is clear that the negotiating skills of Sir Crispin Tickell, our permanent representative, allowed us to play a substantial and positive role in relation to the Iran-Iraq war.

The Government fail to recognise that the lack of sympathy with Third world issues, and particularly the lack of understanding in relation to South Africa, have mightily reduced the effects of our policies and the positive role that we can play elsewhere. I congratulate the hon. Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) on his positive comments about the Commonwealth—another of the areas in which a unique diplomatic asset for us has been mightily underutilised. It is a forum for world problems in miniature.

A day or so ago, the Prime Minister talked about the solution of the drugs problem. Such problems can properly be addressed in the Commonwealth. When the Government talk about the problem of Hong Kong, is it not proper to say that there could be a much greater urge to seek a solution within the Commonwealth context? With the Commonwealth and our EEC partners about 60 countries could help us to share a major moral burden in respect of the future of Hong Kong. I and my party regard the Commonwealth not as an alternative to Europe but as intertwined with Europe, giving us a special strength.

We know that the Commonwealth is not only of proven strength but is increasing. We look forward to the addition of Pakistan. We believe that Namibia is likely to be the fiftieth member, and we understand that Cameroon is already making approaches to the Commonwealth. At least that shows that it is an institution recognised by others as having a new vitality.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) made some cogent remarks about the tragedy of Cyprus. For too long the Government have adopted a laid-back position—cautious, waiting on the sidelines, failing to appreciate the special role that Britain has in Cyprus. Britain has subcontracted the Cypriot problem to the United Nations.

The Government's lack of commitment to the Commonwealth is also demonstrated by their policies towards the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Institute. The Prime Minister demands the right to be different within the Commonwealth. One thinks of the Okanagan statement on the Commonwealth, with the exception of Britain. One thinks of Britain's self-exclusion from foreign affairs Ministers' statements on South Africa. The Prime Minister demands the right to be different within the Commonwealth and the European Community but she expects Stalinist uniformity over developments in NATO. Those demands do not sit easily together.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and other hon. Members have referred to the importance of the Venice and Madrid declarations on the middle east and to the fact that by and large, we follow the decisions that the Israeli Government have taken over the middle east. If the policy change by Mr. Shamir, not just Likud, which is likely to affect the stance adopted by the Israeli Government, effectively scuppers the new peace effort, and if the United States Administration establishes as a consequence an international peace conference, what will be the stance of Her Majesty's Government towards the peace conference? The intifada will continue. There will be enormous human rights abuses. Israel will be the

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despair of its many friends. It will harm itself both in relation to the occupied territories and internally as a result of its own divisions, unless it comes to terms with the new facts in that area.

I agree very much with what was said by the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) about the Inter-Parliamentary Union and other similar institutions. I agree, too, with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) that one should not seek to portray the Council of Europe as an alternative to the European Community. It can play a bridge-building role between eastern and central Europe but we should not give yet another signal to Europe that we are faint hearts on the European road.

My hon. Friends the Members for Hamilton and for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) have already said all that needs to be said about the Kurds. I repeat the question about the British Aerospace contract. The Government could veto it. We shall regard the British Government's response to the Hawk contract as a litmus test of their policies. Will business considerations prevail? Will the British Government view sympathetically human rights for the Kurds or will they view sympathetically the use of chemical weapons in Iraq?

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambodia—*[Laughter.]* With respect, I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley might half accept that appellation. As she mentioned Cambodia, I hope that the Government will assure us that they will not favour the inclusion of the Khmer Rouge in any group that is involved in the peace negotiations, given the history of the Khmer Rouge.

As for the Sudan, the only democratic Government in the area have been topplied by a military coup. We know that the Prime Minister, Sadiq al-Mahdi, is under arrest, and it is said that he could face the death penalty. I appeal to the Government to make representations to the new military regime in Sudan on behalf of Sadiq al-Mahdi.

South Africa, is the area in which the Government's policy—or rather the Prime Minister's policy—is seen at its most personal and malign. That is important in itself but it also has symbolic importance. We know that the Government adopt attitudes in relation to human rights in Poland—at the tomb of Father Popieluszko—and in Hungary at the tomb of Imre Nagy. When will the day come when the Government will pay similar tributes to Steve Biko or other major South African patriots? As my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) said, it is not just a question of the release of Nelson Mandela—even with all the importance attached to that—it is also a question of the context within which Mandela is released, analagous to the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group and the conditions that it has laid down for a proper release for Mandela.

Our assessment is that the South African Government have not yet recognised the need for fundamental change. To them "negotiation" means negotiations with people whom they chose. Even the five-year plan talks about group rights. We believe that by colluding and by treating South Africa as just another country, we are playing into the hands of the establishment. Only sanctions or measures—call them what one will—are likely to bring the powers that be in South Africa to the recognition that they must do deals with the African National Congress. By issuing a statement on behalf of Nelson Mandela, President Botha has implicitly recognised the importance of the ANC. However, to our Prime Minister, the ANC is still just another terrorist organisation. When will the Prime Minister be ready to meet Oliver Tambo and other representatives of the ANC? That would be a positive signal.

I endorse all that my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley, (Mr. Pike) said about Namibia and repeat his questions.

In conclusion, the Government's faults in foreign policy are but an extension of their faults in domestic policy. They are reflected in the curbing of public expenditure. The proportion of our GNP that is devoted to aid is half what it was in 1979. The Government are weak on human rights and have a strident unwillingness to accommodate the other side in any discussions.

Under a Labour Government there will be a new internationalism and a recognition of our new status as a country. We will play to our strengths, which are many. They will not be undervalued as they are under this Administration.

2.7 pm

Mr. Waldegrave: I start by paying one tribute in which I know the Opposition Front Bench will join. The diplomatic service provides a great service for our country. Many hon. Members of all parties—on visits to Cyprus, for example—have had the benefit of the help of our diplomats. If they have not, the diplomats are always available. Let us think for a moment about our diplomats in dangerous places, such as Beirut, and pay a special tribute to them.

We have had some magisterial speeches today. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) made the second of two magisterial speeches in two days. He has told me that he cannot be here for my reply to the debate, but I should like to put on record the fact that I thought his speech outstanding.

The speech of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) was in the great tradition of his speeches. This week this country has lost and mourns our greatest entertainer, Lord Olivier, but luckily things are not all bad. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East is his natural successor. He described himself as a timid man, to whom verbal fisticuffs cause deep and lasting anxiety. He made up some amusing new facts about the past. He referred, for example, to the inflation rate. It is boring to have to remind him that the OECD figures show that in 1975 Italy's inflation rate was 17 per cent., but the United Kingdom's was 24·2 per cent. I cannot remember who was Chancellor of the Exchequer that year. The crocodile that ate one of the right hon. Gentleman's colleagues would never have dared to take even a nip at him. He would have returned, as he did over the years, having swallowed up many people from the Militant Tendency, with the crocodile well digested.

There was much in the speech of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East with which to agree, just as there was in the speeches of the hon. Members for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). One of the difficulties in debating with the Opposition Front-Bench speakers is that they decorate their fundamental agreement with us on many points with a verbiage of

personal attacks on my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. They do so partly to disguise how much underlying agreement there is. We know the game. We learn it from their boss, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). He often agrees with us on, for example, the middle east and our approach to eastern Europe, but that does not preclude a certain personal venom in his approach.

After the prolonged period of paralysis in European politics since the second world war, after the iron curtain fell across Europe, the liberalisation in the Soviet Union has once again put events in Europe back at the centre of the world stage. Not long ago, it was fashionable to say that all the political interests in the world focused on the Pacific. We can now see that the two great events in Europe—the room for manoeuvre which is being allowed in eastern Europe and the development of unity in western Europe—have put those European events back at the centre.

I agreed with the right hon. Member for Leeds, East —although I did not entirely agree with his inflation figures, as he will see in *Hansard*—when he said that the tide of Communism had turned and that that was recognised in the Soviet Union. In a way, the Soviet Union has become a status quo power and, perhaps belatedly, has recognised that she will do well to manage to maintain much of her present position. This has transformed her approach to regional conflict in a variety of places, as the right hon. Member for Leeds, East, the hon. Member for Hamilton and others have said.

The Soviet Union now has a quite different approach to the United Nations, which provides an opportunity, as the right hon. Member for Leeds, East said, to use that institution in some of the ways that its founders hoped it could be used, including the great former Bristolian, Mr. Ernie Bevin, who at the time of the foundation of the United Nations in San Francisco made a speech that bears re-reading. There are hopes for partnership in relation to south-west Africa, the middle east, Cambodia and, as the right hon. Member for Leeds, East said, central America. As Mr. Gorbachev said in New York, this has ended the primacy of ideology in the Soviet Union's approach to foreign affairs.

There was a fascinating debate between the two leviathans of the debate—I was going to say "dinosaurs" —the right hon. Member for Leeds, East and my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, on where the central and eastern parts of the Soviet Union now extend. I tend more to my right hon. Friend's side of the debate. The Finlandisation of central Europe is an objective that is not without hope. It means the achievement of neutral countries following a non-aligned policy and their own social, political and economic strategies, which Mr. Gorbachev endorsed as being their right in his speech in Strasbourg.

It is therefore somewhat paradoxical if, at this stage, we encourage the idea that those Finlandised countries—to use a form of shorthand—should be encouraged to go into the western camp. I wonder whether that would be in their interests in the medium term—where we go in the longer term is a different matter. We should not be unwilling to make it clear that, if Mr. Gorbachev means what he says, his new freedoms for the eastern European countries should lead to their being able to choose that status for themselves, which would be greatly to the benefit of their people. I also thought that we had an outstanding speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), to which the hon. Member for Swansea, East has already paid tribute.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State is more expert on the European Community than I am. She introduced the horrible word "subsidiarity", which is not hers. The concept, if not the word, was invented by Mr. Delors, who has much to his credit, including that word. If we could think of an English word, it would be more helpful. It is the principle upon which we should be working—that there is quite enough for Brussels to do without loading on to Brussels matters with which it need not deal. I am sure that hon. Members of all parties could make an allowance on that. There is no benefit in pushing matters up to higher tiers of Government just for the sake of it. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup had the emphasis wrong. He said that wherever we could co-operate internationally, we should. That is the wrong way round. It is where we need to co-operate internationally that we should.

My hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon was right to say that we should re-emphasise the matters that are going right in Europe, in many of which we have played a leading part, such as the liberalisation of the economy and the avoidance of the fortress Europe concept. Wherever I go in the world, I find that people from the Maghreb, the middle east and the wider world fear that Europe will turn in on itself and become fortress Europe. It would be a disaster if the greatest trading group in the world became an illiberal force in economics. My hon. Friend gave other good advice and I know that my right hon. Friend will note it carefully for the negotiations that lie ahead.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup asked, a little suspiciously, whether our praise for the Council of Europe meant that we were trying to make it into an alternative to the Community. Of course we are not. A number of other hon. Members mentioned the Council of Europe. A useful, new role is emerging for that body, which is to become one of the forums in which discussions in central Europe can take place. Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union now have guest status and Mr Gorbachev made his interesting speech at Strasbourg. We should welcome this developing role for the Council of Europe.

The hon. Member for Hamilton and the right hon. Member for Leeds, East talked about central Europe. I cannot answer properly today the question of the hon. Member for Hamilton about additional sources of money for Hungary. I hope that we can deploy some. Some part of the purpose of my visit was to assess what we can do with how much money. He will note that we have provided a fund of £25 million over five years for Poland. In terms of debt, that is nothing, but in terms of moving people and developing programmes to help individuals and training, it is a considerable programme and a departure for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office which will be welcomed by hon. Members of all parties. We shall have to think how to spend the money properly, and institutions such as the Great Britain East Europe Centre will have a part to play. The last thing we want to do is to give the impression that the money has been tainted by Government intervention in the politics of other states. We must respond to requests and make it clear that it comes, if possible, with all-party backing and certainly with some independence from Government.

[Mr. Waldegrave]

In East-West relations in general, the liberalisation and transformation taking place in the background is being recognised and endorsed in the arms agreements coming forward—not the other way round. Peace is not made by the formalities of arms agreements, as we learnt in the 1930s as a result of the Kellogg pact and other agreements that failed. If the underlying forces are moving to conflict, treaties cannot stop them. It is the other way round. Now that affairs are moving in the right direction, it will become surprisingly easy to make treaties. I am talking about history nervously because of the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) who is looking rather gloomy about my references to the Kellogg pact, so I may have made a mistake there already.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup asked us to consider whether we yet believed that Mr. Gorbachev or any other Soviet leader could contemplate the break-up of the Soviet empire. He was not disagreeing with the right hon. Member for Leeds, East here. I do not think that any Soviet leadership could contemplate the break-up of the heartland of the USSR. There is reason to hope that the internal problems of the Soviet Union—the challenges of the nationalities and the economy—will make it take a more relaxed view about trying to maintain some control over countries that it once thought it needed as buffer states. What is in it for the Russians if they try to run the economy and defences of Hungary, given that they have enough difficulty with their own problems? There may be hope. There may be.

We have heard a number of interesting speeches about the Arab-Israeli question. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge, whose leadership of the Conservative Friends of Israel is contributing to the building of bridges between those who are genuinely seeking progress on this matter.

We regard the Likud party decisions with considerable dismay. Yesterday, my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary met Bassam Abu Sharif of the PLO to show that we think it even more vital for the PLO to stick to its moderate position, which it reaffirmed last December, now that it is under the extra pressure of watching Israel's tentative moves towards rapprochement apparently being reversed. If the PLO can maintain its position, the other voices in Israel will have time to be heard and the friends of Israel in the United States and Europe will have time to emphasise that the election proposal—in its original form not much more than a minimal proposal—needs development rather than diminution. That is what we should all be seeking to achieve.

The hon. Members for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) and for Swansea, East and my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Sir D. Walters) asked what would happen if, despite all the efforts, the election proposal dies. I assure them that we are not backward in seeking an international conference. In fact, we have been rather ahead of the United States on this matter and our position is embodied in the Madrid declaration of the Twelve which was widely welcomed in the middle east. In that declaration, we say that not only should there now be an international conference but that the PLO must participate in it. That is only realistic as it will be impossible to find any other interlocuter who carries weight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge made two points that I support strongly. The first was that nothing will be gained by seeking to isolate Israel. In that respect, I agree with the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). The capacity of Israelis to batten down the hatches and see the world as threatening all round them is one of the problems in making progress towards negotiation. Nothing that reinforces that attitude helps peace. Israel is a democracy, and forces in Israel, movingly represented in a recent piece by Amos Oz in *The Daily Telegraph*, need our support and help.

Grave problems also exist elsewhere in the middle east. The hon. Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) are both known as passionate protectors of the tragic Kurdish people. They both said that the Kurdish tragedy may be continuing. As has been said, the British Government played an honourable role in drawing the attention of the world to the tragedy at the time, when very few others were prepared to speak out. My speech at the Paris conference on chemical weapons was the only one to mention Iraq by name. All the others somehow managed to avoid the subject. I do not claim too much credit for that; we could not keep silent. The question that we face is the perennial, and most difficult of all questions for Foreign Office Ministers and Governments to answer: how we should balance our trading interests and our care for human rights. At what point do we say that we cannot deal with a country, or that we must seek progress by contacts, pressure and influence?

I have heard Opposition Members advance that argument the other way in relation to the Soviet Union at its worst and China at its worst periods. It has been argued that we should not cut countries off and that we should work with those people who we can work with. That can be said of some in Iraq as well. This is a difficult and agonising decision. I have no answer to it today, nor about the proposed Hawk deal. All that I can say is that the analysis of that will be carried out within the guidelines that we have maintained in the past in these matters.

Sir Russell Johnston: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can add very little to what I have already said, and I have much of the rest of the world to try to cover. Doubtless if a decision is made that is adverse to those arguments, we shall have other occasions on which to pursue them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) mentioned Iran. He is right to say that if there are signs of progress after the presidential election, Britain must and will respond to them. He is also right to say that the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen is another country that has noticed which way the wind is turning in the Soviet Union's foreign policy and is seeking other friends. Royal Navy ships recently went there, which a few years back would have been surprising, and they were greeted with the usual Aden welcome.

The hon. Member for Swansea, East mentioned Sudan. The first thing that we want to say to that new Government is that, above all, the Sudan needs peace in the south. We urge the new regime to maintain human

rights in relation not only to previous Ministers, but those in the south and in the country as a whole. There is confusion and it is difficult to say at this stage what will happen.

Several hon. Members, led by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), mentioned South Africa. My hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) made a speech with which I very much agreed. The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) spoke about South Africa and Namibia. I am much less of an expert on this than my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, but I found much of what they said out of date. It seemed to be simply a replaying of the gramophone record of sanctions, as though nothing had happened in southern Africa, the relationship between the Soviet Union and South Africa were not changing, and the hopes of progress were not higher now than they have been for many years. Our opportunity and challenge is to pass on that greatest African economy intact to its rightful owners—the population as a whole—rather than passing on a ruined economy, as happens so frequently in other parts of the world.

The hon. Members for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber and for Aberdeen, North spoke about Angola. We were greatly encouraged when, against the odds, President Dos Santos and Dr. Savimbi met and agreed the ceasefire. Although the delegations have now broken off their talks, we believe that they may shortly be resumed and we are urging both sides to show flexibility.

The return of the murderous Pol Pot regime in Cambodia must be out of the question. Any influence that we can use to that end we shall try to use.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Swansea, East for giving me the opportunity to speak about Argentina. It is true that the recent statement by the new President Menem —whose peaceful transition to power we must welcome in that populous country—and by foreign minister Cavallo, seem encouraging. If Argentina is now ready to exclude sovereignty from talks, we welcome that as a basis for talks. It appears to be saying that it will do that. Things are moving fast, so such a move is a welcome sign to which we shall respond appropriately.

We had a speech of considerable volume from the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Haynes) on Cyprus. I regret that, a couple of weeks ago, when we had a most moving debate on Cyprus to which I replied, something detained the hon. Gentleman and he could not be there. Nevertheless, we welcome him now. I strongly refute his argument that the Government are doing nothing on Cyprus. The diplomatic activity last year in relation to Cyprus was probably more intense than for any territory with the same population. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, have all met President Vassiliou. I agree with what the hon. Gentleman said about President Vassiliou. There has been a range of diplomatic contacts aimed at producing progress, and we are certainly as dedicated to the outcome which the hon. Gentleman rightly and eloquently defended as anybody else.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks), the hon. Member for Islington, North, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East and my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) talked about some of the new planetary issues and the use of multinational organisations such as the United Nations and the Commonwealth to try to produce solutions on an international and multilateral basis. I pay tribute to the environmental achievements in Brazil last week by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development.

On the proliferation of missiles——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 19th July, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure))—

(1) Motions in the name of Mr. Neil Kinnock relating to Water and Public Health may be proceeded with for not more than three hours after the first of them has been entered upon;

(2) if proceedings on such Motions have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall at the expiration of that period put the Question already proposed from the Chair; and

(3) no further such Motion shall then be made.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Northern Relief Road (Birmingham)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): I should like to express some of the concerns of my constituents and more general concerns about the recent proposals of the Department of Transport in respect of the Birmingham northern relief route, the Birmingham north orbital route or, as some of us believe it to be, the new M6. Those concerns can best be summed up by citing a letter from two of my constituents, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, who live in Hednesford road, Brownhills. It is one of many letters that I have received on the subject, and it indentifies the general concern about the initiatives announced by the Government. It states:

"Dear Mr. Shepherd,

It was in May, 1984 that we were first informed of the new proposed Road, our house was in line on four out of the five proposed routes, which is the Chasewater variation route, so it was quite a shock.

My wife and I purchased our home in 1976, we were very happy with it liking the design, location and the friendliness of the people and neighbours of the area, we thought we were very lucky.

We both had good jobs and set about planning and vastly improving the property, patio window, large bay window, all double glazing, fitted kitchen, all Regency Design plaster moulding throughout, landscaped garden etc. so when we heard that we may lose our home, naturally we were very upset.

But, worse than anything has been the waiting, and the last 5 years have been the worst of our lives, all the enjoyment has gone out of our home, due to the fact that we can no longer make any plans not knowing about the future, and how long we have here, making us feel very insecure.

So you can imagine how we felt when we received a letter from the Department of Transport 2 weeks ago, saying that a decision has still not been reached on the route, and then to read in the local press on Friday evening that it may take another 5/6 years before we know due to the fact that a toll road is now being considered, is just too much, there is a limit to what one can endure.

After the Enquiry ended last September, we were promised of a decision in about 6 months time, of which we were patiently awaiting, to be expected to have to live through another 5/6 years like we have through the last 5 is quite unthinkable.

All we are asking Mr. Shepherd for both ourselves and all our neighbours is for them to please, please make up their minds so that we can get on with our lives once again, and to save all the misery and unhappiness that we are experiencing through all the uncertainty."

As the Minister will know, such anxiety and much more followed the Secretary of State's announcement by way of a written answer on 22 May to launch a Green Paper entitled "New Roads by New Means". He said that he proposed to hold a competition for the private sector to finance, design, build and operate a road which would serve broadly the same purposes as would be served by the published proposals for the Birmingham northern relief road. This road will be effectively the new M6 bypassing Birmingham.

On the same day as the Secretary of State's written answer to that parliamentary question he wrote to me enclosing a copy. The West Midlands regional office of highways at Five Ways tower also wrote that same day to members of the public advising them of the proposed competition and saying that in the circumstances it would be inappropriate to take decisions on the Featherstone to Coleshill north orbital route until the competition had taken place.

I stress that the delay explicit in the decision-making procedure is caused by the decision to defer until completion of the competition. I also stress that the release of information was arranged by the Secretary of State and the Minister of State without any consultation or inquiry involving local Members of Parliament as to the appropriateness of singling out this new M6 for a competition. Inasmuch as their predecessors had sought and in some respects accepted the views of their colleagues who were affected by the new M6, I deeply regret the Minister's decision to eschew consultation.

I do not believe that this was intentional arrogance. Rather, it was the casual indifference of a functionary. It was insensitivity, not deliberate arrogance, but I ask the Secretary of State and the Minister of State to reflect on the nature of representative government. To consult is not merely a courtesy; it is a way of seeking consent or acquiescence, and it is proper and right.

The conception of what I call the new M6 around Birmingham has been protracted. It was in August 1978 that the Department's road programme and highways policy division first issued a planning brief to the west midlands regional office instructing it to begin preparation of two schemes aimed at a new north orbital route to relieve the severely overloaded section of the M6 passing through the northern part of the west midlands conurbation. The schemes related, respectively, to a section planned to run from Essington—M6—to Bassetts Pole—A38—and to another to run from Bassetts Pole to Dunton. The brief was to examine not only new route solutions but an improvement of existing roads, and it assumed that a high standard dual two-lane all-purpose route would be provided.

The then Parliamentary Under-Secretary announced in a press release dated 9 August 1978 the addition of both schemes into the trunk road preparation pool. In 1980, the two schemes were included in the 1984 onwards reserve list. In the 1983 roads White Paper they were identified as dual three-lane standard roads, and the Bassetts Pole to Dunton scheme was extended to the M42/M6 near Coleshill. Further examination of the schemes led the Department to the conclusion that, to provide as much relief to the M6 as possible, the volumes of traffic that would use the new route would require a dual three-lane route to motorway standard. On that basis, the Department proceeded to public consultation in 1984.

At preview meetings held in Birmingham on 8 May 1984, the director of transport in the regional office presented proposals for what had by then become known as the northern relief route. The following day, 9 May, the Department issued a press release announcing a public consultation exercise on the route. Separate consultation documents for the two schemes were distributed to households in the area.

The documents presented five feasible alternative routes which had been identified between Essington and Bassetts Pole and two between Bassetts Pole and Coleshill. They also included an assessment of the impact of each route, and questionnaires to be completed by 20 July 1984. All the route options could take land and required the demolition of housing and other property. All options

would also have effects on land and property remaining close by, in terms of noise, depreciation, severance and so on, during and after construction.

Public exhibitions of the proposals were held from 17 May to 9 June 1984 at a number of local points. Representatives of the Department and of the consulting engineers were in attendance to explain the alternatives and to answer questions. The total attendance at these exhibitions was 6,400, and 6,278 questionnaires were returned. Responses were also received from a number of public bodies. No consensus emerged from the consultation exercise. The response of residents was to reject all routes or to opt for the ones furthest from their homes. The Secretary of State for the Environment—NIMBY—would well appreciate the natural response that most of us have to development.

Opinion among public bodies was divided. The regional office was in the process of analysing the public response when the then Minister of State visited the area in October 1984. Each local Member of Parliament affected by the scheme took up the matter and one of my hon. Friends raised it in an Adjournment debate on 4 December 1984. In his reply to that debate, the Under-Secretary said that he was conscious of the fact that the uncertainty about the new route created anxiety among those living in the area and could lead to a certain degree of blighting of property. For that reason, he said that the Department was anxious to reach as early a decision as possible and to make an announcement in the early part of 1985.

The then Minister of State paid another visit to the area on 12 July this year—I wish that the present Minister of State had done the same. It was not, however, until 11 March 1986, when the then Minister with responsibility for roads and traffic met local Members of Parliament, that the decision became known that the preferred route was broadly in line with the green—Chasewater—and yellow options which had been considered at the public consultation stage.

The Department announced the decision in a press release on 12 March 1986. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary wrote to me enclosing an advance copy of the press release on that date. It reiterated the urgent need for a new road. Paragraph 2 said:

"the main aim of the new road is to provide urgently needed relief to the heavily overloaded sections of the M6 where it passes through the West Midlands conurbation."

It went on to note that the M6 plays a

"vital role in the national road network"

but that it had become

"the victim of its own success".

This meant, and means, that it is one of the most heavily used sections of our motorway system. By 1980, average daily flows had already exceeded 110,000 vehicles in places, and peak flows of over 130,000 vehicles a day had been recorded. That is for a road with a design capacity of about 70,000 vehicles a day. The percentage of heavy goods vehicles was 30, which was exceptionally high. In other words, the M6 at certain times is near collapse in the Birmingham section. Anyone who uses the section knows how desperate the situation is. It is made even worse by essential road works and the level of accidents which occur.

The Department noted the growth of traffic levels and recorded that by the design year for the scheme there would be more than 200,000 vehicles per day in the north-west/south-east corridor through the region. A large percentage of the traffic passes through the conurbation or is long-distance traffic which has its origin or destination within it. It is the nature of this corridor traffic which leads many of us to believe that the north Birmingham relief road will become effectively an integral part of a continuous flow of traffic along the M6 from the north-west to the south-east. Hence it is commonly referred to as the new M6. The announcement of the preferred route brought into effect the blight provisions of section 192(1)(f) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

The press release also advised that, depending on the time taken to get through the statutory stages and on the availability of funds, work on the scheme would commence in 1991 and that the new road could be open to traffic in 1993. By the time of the planning inspectorate's press release of 8 March 1988, subject to completion of the necessary statutory procedures construction could still start in 1991, but would take about three years to complete. Presumably that means an opening at some time in 1994.

The press release envisaged publication of the draft line orders in mid-1987. In the event, it was September of that year. On 8 March it was announced that there would be a public inquiry between 24 May and 23 September 1988. The inspector, Mr. Kavanagh, reported to the Departments of the Environment and of Transport before Easter of this year.

On 18 May, the Secretary of State published his White Paper entitled "Roads for Prosperity", with no reference to the Birmingham north orbital route. On 22 May, in a flurry of activity, he published his Green Paper entitled "New Roads by New Means", which dealt with bringing in private finance. Again, that did not mention the Birmingham, northern relief route. Characteristically, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State sent a letter dated that same day, which included his planted parliamentary question and his written response, which was to the effect that there is to be a competition for the finance, design, construction and operation of a private road, which would serve broadly the same purposes as would be served by the published proposals for the Birmingham northern relief road. This, for want of a better term, new road proposal would not be confined to the preferred route identified by the previous Secretary of State.

The thought that there is a possibility that a new motorway may be constructed somewhere, don't know where, don't know when, is a curious end piece to the hard-won acquiescence on an identified preferred route. Indeed, the Government have already spent about £10 million of our money on specialist firms and consultants, principally Sir Owen Williams and Partners.

The Minister claims that this work is not abortive. He will make this information available to private commercial firms—not to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker nor to me, nor to the general public who paid for these reports, but he will make it available to private commercial interests. Further, the Secretary of State thinks that it would be inappropriate to take decisions on the presently proposed draft scheme and orders until this "sometime future" competition—date unknown, legislative basis uncertain—has taken place. Homes and lives have been blighted, as recognised by the Department having already paid out £2·3 million, and there are more payments in the pipeline. All this is for a

[Mr. Richard Shepherd]

road that we are now led to understand may not be even approximately where its preferred route has been the subject of public inquiry.

I regret that the Minister's advocacy has caused both great uncertainty, with the possibility of a wider shadow of blight extending from Brownhills to Lichfield, and raised the spectre of delay. If I have understood his judgment, it is that somewhere in a corridor running from about Essington to Coleshill there may be a toll motorway. This toll motorway, if it is to meet earlier projections, should be in operation in 1994. It will be about 30 miles long and will have 12 junctions if it is to meet some of the purpose of the presently understood route. Being a private motorway, it will under present legislation require a private Bill or the hybrid Bill procedure. There have been private Bill promoters who can testify that this procedure can involve considerable delay.

To meet that difficulty the Government have decided on the introduction of a new procedure by way of amendment to the Highways Act 1980. The Secretary of State will legislate for the new M6 to be a private road. At least, that was the position until about 4.45 pm yesterday when, in another flurry of activity, the Department responded to a letter written some time ago. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who unfortunately cannot be here today, wrote to me, and I shall quote his letter as it has some bearing on the debate. It said:

"You have expressed in the strongest terms your own concern, and the representations you have received from your constituents, about the route which any privately financed Birmingham northern relief road should take and about the need to avoid delay—indeed, you are moving an Adjournment debate on the subject tomorrow. Having considered and reflected on these representations, I am writing to you to set out my conclusions."

No discussion, no consultation—my right hon. Friend found himself in a hole and had to send a letter at 4.45 pm on the day before the debate.

The letter continued:

"As you know, my original intention had been to leave it open to bidders to propose their own route, for a road serving broadly the same purposes as the public sector proposal which we put to the public inquiry. The aim was to give the private sector maximum flexibility to propose routes which might offer better solutions than the original route; after all, one of the main advantages of involving the private sector in the provisions of roads is to make use of their innovative ideas and skills. Nevertheless, you have made it very clear to me that, after much work on the part of all concerned, the present route has achieved a good degree of consensus; and you have persuaded me that it would be too damaging and disruptive to leave bidders the freedom to propose wholly new routes."

That is two months after the Government had already created great uncertainty and anxiety. It continued:

"I therefore now propose to meet your concerns by requiring bidders to make proposals which broadly follow the line of the route originally proposed by my Department to the public inquiry. They may not propose entirely new routes. Bidders will of course produce their own designs and will have freedom to propose variations or improvements to the route. These will be considered at the public inquiry, along with all other aspects of the successful tenderer's proposals. It will be open to objectors to propose alternative routes or variations, just as they were able to do at the inquiry into the Department's original proposals. The Inspector will have to consider proposals and objections on their merits, and I will examine the Inspector's report in the light of all the relevant considerations.

I am able to meet your concerns about the route because of the special circumstances of the BNRR which you have made so clear to me. Private sector promoters will have greater freedom to propose routes in most other competitions, because there will not be an existing proposal at a fairly advanced stage of preparation. The decision on the route for the BNRR does not therefore set a precedent or compromise the underlying policy.

I appreciate and share your concern about timing of the BNRR"—

hallelujah.

"My aim is not to delay the scheme as a result of the private sector competition. The original publicly financed road was not due to open to traffic anyway until the mid-1990s, and that was subject to considerable uncertainty."

That was slippage already. It continued:

"Similar uncertainties apply to a privately financed scheme, and indeed to all major road schemes. Subject to these uncertainties, I would expect a private financed scheme to be able broadly to match the former projected opening date of the mid-1990s. To reinforce the point, I shall ask bidders to make proposals on the basis of an opening date in 1995. For our part, we shall proceed as fast as possible. This month we are issuing background material to potential bidders, and next month a formal invitation to tenderers to pre-quality will be placed in the EC Journal."

I do not want to delay the House, but in that flurry of correspondence I also received a letter from my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic, responding on behalf of my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport. It is important to some of my constituents because it raises the question of awarding some of the costs of successful objectors. I shall quote it because it is important to put it on the record. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for signing the letter in time for me to receive it before the debate. It said:

"Thank you for your letter of 16 June to Michael Portillo.

It is the Department's practice following a decision on an inquiry to award qualified successful objectors some or all of their costs depending on the degree of success. A qualified objector is one with an interest in the land affected such as owner lessee or occupier.

Where a decision is made to abandon the proposals entirely objectors' costs are dealt with immediately. In cases where it is intended that fresh proposals will be taken forward, the assessment of costs is usually deferred until the final decision has been taken.

In the case of the Birmingham Northern Relief Road it was announced that a decision following the inquiry would be deferred until the private finance competition has taken place. Award of objectors' costs will be considered once the decision on the inquiry has been announced.

If as a result of the competition it is decided to implement proposals other than those taken to the inquiry, claims for costs will be invited from qualified objectors.

Objectors' costs cover all reasonable costs incurred in preparing and presenting the case at the inquiry—including such items as travelling expenses."

Many citizens' action groups, having a genuine concern for their environment and locality, cannot meet the criteria set out in that letter, despite the fact that they may have incurred considerable costs. Some individuals may even be dead by the time that the matter of costs is considered.

My intention is not to review the proposals for new road finance or to attack them. None of us finds it particularly difficult to accept the principle that, in the case of new roads such as the corridor between Birmingham and Manchester announced in the Green Paper, one must canvass all possible alternatives for their financing and construction. However, the northern relief road has already been 10 years in preparation, from its preparatory and initial stages through to the public inquiry. We shall have a difficult problem in political terms in convincing local residents—particularly given that there has been no improvement to Aldridge-Brownhills' roads infrastructure for 25 years, despite its population increasing from 35,000

to nearly 92,000—that they are now confronted by the possibility of a toll road that will toll part of a continuous M6, from the north-west to the south-east. There is also the issue of the 12 junctions, which I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister is considering carefully.

The sequence of announcements has given rise to the belief locally that a deal has been cobbled up with national construction companies such as Tarmac, which have convinced the Ministry that the quick kill method of introducing the concept to the public is to take over a project in which citizens have already invested £10 million and whose public inquiry they also financed. All of that is being thrown up in the air in a curious way. In a debate only the other week, my hon. Friend the Minister said, as I understood him, that the matter merits no significant debate. Therefore, we must countenance either new legislation or the use of the private Member's Bill or hybrid Bill procedure. It is difficult to understand how that does not imply delay, particularly when a Europeanwide competition is also involved.

I have tried to express some of the frustrations that are felt in connection with that matter. What function can we perform as Members of Parliament when a Secretary of State and a Minister of State do not think it is worth even consulting local Members of Parliament and of continuing a tradition established by their predecessors in seeking such advice? This Adjournment debate is indicative of the insensitivity of senior Ministers, who did not even feel that it was worth troubling local residents or their elected representatives in respect of a tremendously important decision.

2.53 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) on securing the debate and on the basically fair way in which he conveyed his views and the concerns and interests of his constituents. My hon. Friend will not be surprised if I totally reject any words of his that might be taken as criticism either of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or of my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport.

Single Member constituencies make it possible for people's interests to be forcefully presented. If there is one thing to be said about my hon. Friend, it is that he never puts forward his views in any other way. If he has a view worth expressing, he presents it in a manner that ensures that all hear it clearly. That is demonstrated by the response of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the letter that my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills read out.

I am grateful also for my hon. Friend's kind remarks about the letter on successful objectors' costs. It is important to come to the House of Commons not with some goodies to distract attention, but to try to provide information so that hon. Members can make their speeches in the light of known information rather than do a magician's act.

I now refer to the general point about "New Roads by New Means"—the private funding, design, even private operating opportunities. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has rightly been congratulated on his mainly successful attempts so far to remove unnecessay obstacles to private sector involvement. My hon. Friend, with his west midlands constituency, will know that we would not have had canals if it had been up to the Treasury and the Department of Transport to provide them. Also, we would not have had railways, so many ports, or airports if it had been up to central Government. On many occasions, central Government are even more conservative than I am. In looking for private sector involvement, we have made great strides forward. The Channel tunnel is perhaps the biggest private sector scheme in the world at the moment. I would not spend too much time talking about the Dartford to Thurrock bridge, which is to provide extra capacity linking the M25 across the Thames.

When my right hon. Friend wanted to bring forward new opportunties for private sector involvement, he could have said, "We will not start even looking at any scheme if it has been in the roads programme." That would probably have meant that there would be no private sector involvement, in addition to the ones that we have in different forms at the moment, for about 13 years. I do not think that anyone would want that.

My hon. Friend's main criticism is that the Department was unable to consult him and our hon. Friends who represent the other parts of what we might call the new M6. If that has caused offence, I apologise. It was probably correct to try to treat the House of Commons as a whole in putting forward the proposal. My hon. Friend said also that the Department and its Ministers claim some credit for the modification of what my right hon. Friend called the purist view, instead of allowing private sector competitors to range far and wide and create a great deal of extra uncertainty. In a press notice and in a letter to my hon. Friend, my right hon. Friend said that the bidders will be expected to stick to pretty well the line, the route and the function of the new M6 as we put it to inquiry.

I emphasise the point that my hon. Friend read from the letter from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. We hope that there will not be much unnecessary extra delay. I hope that no one listening to the debate or reading reports of it afterwards will assume that road schemes run like clockwork anyway. The nearest analogy that I can think of is a dinghy race—things can only go wrong, and there is no normal way of accelerating, although we will do the best we can on the M40. My hon. Friend the Minister of State is doing all he can to try to make sure that we learn the lessons. We will all learn lessons from my hon. Friend's speech and from his constituents' concern.

As time moves on, many of the apprehensions that have rightly been expressed will turn out not to have foundation. Notification of the European competition is in the official journal. People will then qualify for the tendering process. That should not provide, as the cliché goes, an ongoing continuing delay situation. It should be a one-off—a notice that, if one wants to come in, that is fine.

I refer those who are interested in this subject to the working party on private finance in the construction industry sector group of the National Economic Development Office and the paper entitled "Private Participation in Infrastructure Projects" by R. S. Dobson. It refers to some of the problems that the private sector faces and what kind of action plan would move things forward. It would be in the interests of the private sector who wish to bid and also in the interests of my hon. Friend's constituents to read it.

I place on record quietly but firmly that nothing that we are doing is at the behest or in the interests of a partlcular construction firm. People may have had their doubts, but

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

they are not correct. On the two other occasions when people have had bright ideas in the construction industry, we have gone out to tender, and on each occasion the people who first had a good idea were not the ones who won the tender competition. There is no given right for people to say that the intellectual property or idea they may have had in the first place, which may or may not duplicate other things in this or in other countries, necessarily gives them the right to win a large contract or to get the advantage of a parliamentary procedure, which, as my hon. Friend said, could be under general legislation or a hybrid Bill. What matters is that we meet the interests of travellers while meeting the interests of local people during the period of uncertainty.

The blight and the delay connected with various road schemes cause me concern. My hon. Friend and his parliamentary neighbours share that concern. Future plans will be introduced without unnecessary delay. When the history of the Birmingham northern relief road, or the new M6, is written, I think we shall find that the movement towards the provision of private finance is a plus rather than a minus and that, because of my hon. Friend's work, and that of others like him, there will be relatively little extra delay. His constituents will therefore be grateful for the representations that my hon. Friend has made on their behalf in the House and to the Departmentof Transport.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 3 July 1989

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Conciliation Service

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration the Lord Chancellor's Department is giving to the establishment of a conciliation service to assist the courts in matrimonial and custody cases.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor received the report of the conciliation project unit based at the university of Newcastle upon Tyne in March of this year. The report, and comments upon it, will be carefully evaluated and the role of conciliation considered as part of the Lord Chancellor's announced rolling programme of reform of family law and procedure.

Family Courts

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Attorney-General what recent representations the Lord Chancellor has received on the subject of family courts.

The Attorney-General: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor continues to receive correspondence regarding family courts both from hon. Members and from members of the public and interested organisations. Precise information on the number of representations is not readily available as much of the correspondence refers to family courts as one of a number of issues or as an ancillary matter to the main focus of the correspondence.

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General what is the longest and shortest time taken between the dispatch of an explanatory statement from the British embassy in Islamabad and arrival at the immigration appellate offices in London during the last year, to date; what is the longest and shortest time taken by the explanatory statements being sent from London and arrival in Leeds; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Responsibility for dispatching explanatory statements from diplomatic posts overseas to the United Kingdom is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Explanatory statements from Islamabad are sent to the appellate authorities by diplomatic bag. During the last year to date the longest transit time for diplomatic mail between Islamabad and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was 11 days, the shortest two days. Mail received in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office addressed to the appellate authorities is forwarded by daily Government van service.

Once received at the appellate authorities' headquarters in London, explanatory statements and the accompanying notices of appeal are checked, processed and where appropriate, dispatched to regional hearing centres. During the last year to date, it is estimated that explanatory statements have taken between three and 17 weeks to reach the hearing centre at Leeds.

The delay in dispatching case papers to Leeds reflects the pressure on the appellate authorities caused by the increasing volume of work. The number of cases received in 1988 was 60 per cent. higher than in 1987, and there has been a further increase in the first five months of 1989. The appellate authorities have employed additional staff and overtime in an endeavour to minimise delays and the Lord Chancellor's Department continues to monitor the position.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received about delays in explanatory statements being dispatched from the post in Islamabad to the immigration appellate authorities in London and dispatch from London to Leeds; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Responsibility for the despatch of explanatory statements from Islamabad to London rests with the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. The Lord Chancellor, who is responsible for the administration of the immigration appellate authorities, has received no specific representations about the length of time taken for explanatory statements to be processed in London and sent to Leeds, other than from the hon. Member himself.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Stanbrook: To ask the Attorney-General what action he proposes to take in the light of the expressed intention of the Storehouse Group to open its shops for trading on Sundays in defiance of the provisions of the Shops Act 1950.

The Attorney-General: It is the duty of each local authority to enforce the Shops Act 1950 in its area. I refer my hon. Friend to the written answer that I gave him on 17 April 1989.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Environment-friendly Products

65. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken to encourage environmentally friendly products as part of the Government's overseas development strategy.

Mr. Chris Patten: We support research into a number of environmentally friendly products. For example, we fund the development of appropriate, energy-efficient technologies and of more precise application systems for pesticides. All programme managers in my Department are required to ensure the environmental soundness of projects.

UN Environmental Convention

66. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the implications for overseas aid policy of the United Nations environmental convention initiative.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government have proposed a simple framework or umbrella convention setting out

general principles for good practice in matters affecting the world's climate. The implications for our aid work would be to enhance the priority given in developing countries to programmes aimed at improving energy efficiency and at forestry. We are already using aid funds in these areas and are seeking to identify further projects which we might be able to support. It is too early to say how any specific protocol subsequently negotiated under the convention would affect aid policy.

European Community (Aid)

67. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the combined average gross national product given in overseas aid by all members of the European Community, except the United Kingdom, in the latest available year.

Mr. Chris Patten: Figures are available only for those member countries of the European Community which are also members of the development assistance committee of the OECD. In any case, such figures are open to varying interpretations. The overall percentage of gross national product given in overseas aid by these seven countries, excluding the United Kingdom, was 0·53 per cent. in 1987 and is provisionally estimated at the same figure in 1988.

Bursaries

68. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications he has received for bursaries for students from the Republic of South Africa and Botswana to attend courses at British further education establishments for the academic year 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The British Council, on our behalf, has received well over 2,200 applications for bursaries for the academic year 1989-90 for students from South Africa, and 100 applications for students from Botswana.

Overseas Students

69. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of expenditure on overseas students funded under the aid programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Provision for the financial year 1989-90 is £94 million in support of more than 15,000 overseas students. In addition, a contribution of £5·8 million is being made available to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office scholarships and awards scheme.

Vietnam

70. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he expects to restore development aid to Vietnam in the light of Vietnam's withdrawal from Cambodia.

Mr. Chris Patten: It is still too early to give a firm indication on development aid to Vietnam. We will consider this in the light of the actual withdrawal of troops from Cambodia.

Guyana

71. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support he is providing for Guyana's economic reform programme.

Mr. Chris Patten: Provided that the IMF programme remains viable, we shall be providing for the three years 1989 to 1991 *(a)* £13·7 million capital aid for the purchase of United Kingdom imports; *(b)* a $US8 million bridging loan to help Guyana pay its debt service arrears to the international financial institutions when they fall due in November; *(c)* a waiver of about £1 million a year of payments due on past United Kingdom aid loans; and *(d)* a technical co-operation programme costing about £1·5 million a year, aimed primarily at strengthening public sector management.

Central Africa

72. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of official assistance to central African countries is given in the form of medical supplies.

Mr. Chris Patten: Information is not available in the precise form requested. In 1987, the latest year for which figures are available, 3 per cent. of the Overseas Development Administration's capital project aid to Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, taken together, was spent on the health sector. In the same year the proportion of British aid-financed personnel in those countries working in health was 14 per cent.

Sub-Saharan Africa

73. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total bilateral aid in real terms given by the United Kingdom to sub-Saharan Africa in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Chris Patten: British bilateral aid to sub-Saharan Africa in constant 1988 prices was £410 million in 1979 and an estimated £400 million in 1988.

Indonesia

Mr. Robert Banks To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) to which projects soft loans in the £50 million aid package to Indonesia announced on 14 June are to be applied;

(2) what is the number of British companies and the types of products which will be supplied to Indonesia as part of the recently announced package of aid;

(3) what is the number of British specialists who will be directly employed in Indonesia as part of the recently announced aid package;

(4) whether the recently announced aid package to Indonesia will result in any greater preservation of the rain forest.

Mr. Chris Patten: The £50 million aid package to Indonesia announced on 14 June is the second tranche of a £100 million soft loan facility signed with the Government of Indonesia in December 1988, and means that £185 million worth of soft loans are now available to fund projects in Indonesia. These funds are not allocated at the outset to specific projects, but likely candidates are the subject of feasibility studies and appraisals and then, if both Governments agree, are allocated funds. It is not, therefore, possible at this stage to say which projects will be allocated funds, how many British companies or specialists will benefit or what types of products will be

supplied, but we will, of course, be seeking to maximise the benefits to British industry, as well as to Indonesia, of these funds. One of the leading candidates for funding is a forestry radio communications system project aimed at improving the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry's management and control of the rain forests.

Soft Loans

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the amount of soft loans currently provided by the United Kingdom in the form of aid to Commonwealth countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1988 Commonwealth countries received £7,863,050 in the form of concessional loans qualifying as official development assistance. So far no soft loan agreements under the aid and trade provision have been concluded with Commonwealth countries, though several offers of soft loan assistance have been made.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the amount of soft loans currently provided by the United Kingdom in the form of aid to non-Commonwealth developing countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1988 non-Commonwealth developing countries received £4,833,155 from the United Kingdom in the form of concesional loans qualifying as official development assistance. In addition 12 soft loans worth in total £399 million have been concluded with six non-Commonwealth developing countries under the aid and trade provision.

Indonesia (Rain Forest Discussions)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent mission to Indonesia to discuss rain forest issues.

Mr. Chris Patten: The recent forestry project identification mission made good progress in discussing with the Indonesian Government the provision of technical co-operation in the forestry sector. The mission recommends a four year co-ordinated programme of assistance with emphasis on improving the management (including natural regeneration) of the lowland rain forest of Indonesia. Senior Indonesian officials support the mission's findings in principle and when the latter have been formally approved, three project preparation missions will be mounted, probably in late 1989.

Tanzania

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance was provided to Tanzania for the purchase of vehicles.

Mr. Chris Patten: During the financial year 1988-89, we provided nearly £7·5 million for vehicles from within the finance we made available to support the Tanzanian balance of payments. We also separately provided over £750,000 as emergency assistance for trucks for the cotton sector. In addition, we provided vehicles as part of our support to a number of development projects.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial aid has been given to Tanzania in 1989.

Mr. Chris Patten: Gross British bilateral aid to Tanzania in 1988 is estimated at £33·5 million. This year we expect to maintain our programme at a substantial level.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Irradiated Food

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce legislation to forbid the sale of irradiated food in restaurants.

Mr. Ryder: The sale of irradiated food in catering outlets presents different practical problems from sales in retail shops. I am in the process of examining the issues involved.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the procedures his Minister will go through up to the lifting of the ban on food irradiation and the timetable for these procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I have made clear that we need to obtain wider powers to enable us to provide for the control mechanism that we consider necessary for food irradiation. It will then be necessary to consult all the interested parties over the details of the control system and to introduce the necessary regulations to give effect to this. The timetable will depend on a number of factors, in particular the timing of the primary legislation.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he proposes to take any further action in the light of the Southwood report on bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. MacGregor *[pursuant to his reply, 13 June 1989, c. 352]:* The detailed plans in relation to the next stage of this vital study have now been drawn up, and implementation will start shortly. This will involve the purchase of 660 cattle, 330 offspring of animals affected with BSE and 330 control animals. They will be transported to and housed at the Ministry's experimental husbandry farms at Boxworth, Drayton and Gleadthorpe. The study will last up to seven years and will cost an estimated £4·7 million.

Farm Diversification Grants

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to his reply to the hon. Member for South Shields of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *251*, if he is able to list the reasons for rejecting applications for farm diversification grant schemes in 1988.

Mr. Ryder: The reasons for rejection of grant applications were as follows:

	Number
Able to carry out work without grant	45
Enterprises of works not eligible	44
Applicants not eligible	27
Receiving grant from other public funds	4
Planning consent refused	4
Not likely to be viable	3
Other miscellaneous reasons including work started before application	10

Gas Emissions

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his reply to the hon. Member for South Shields of 27 June, if he will list all the schemes introduced by his Ministry which help reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The measures include the designation of 19 environmentally sensitive areas since 1987; the introduction of the farm woodland scheme and the set-aside scheme in 1988; and the introduction, earlier this year, of a new farm and conservation grant scheme which offers grant inter alia for energy saving, effluent facilities and for the regeneration of native woodlands and heather moors. In addition, the policies adopted by the European Community in recent years to reduce surplus production of agricultural commodities will help to mitigate emissions.

Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of man hours in the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service devoted to environmental training for each year since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Although records have not been kept in the precise form requested, it is estimated that from 1980 to the end of 1988 on average 4,780 man hours per year have been spent on ADAS environmental core training. In addition, a significant amount of environmental training is undertaken as an integral part of discipline training for new entrants and ADAS advisers.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of posts in the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service devoted to training for each year since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Participation in training activities is an essential and integral feature of the professional development and responsibilities of all ADAS staff. No individual staff are allocated full-time to training duties but all officers responsible for managing other ADAS staff, or with appropriate professional skills, or experience have responsibility to monitor, arrange or provide training in appropriate subjects.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the research projects directly aimed at *(a)* finding the causes of salmonella enteriditis, botulism and other similar infections such as salmonella typhimurium and *(b)* the treatment and or vaccination of poultry flocks.

Mr. Ryder: Research on the causes of human infections is a matter for the Department of Health. My Department however funds the following work aimed at minimising the risk of infection through the food chain:

Predictive Modelling of the Growth of Pathogenic Microorganisms in Food Systems.

A co-ordinated programme of research into the growth and survival of microorganisms in real food systems. The development of a modelling database and expert system for eventual use by the food industry. The programme will initially concentrate on those food-related microorganisms that are of major public health significance: Salmonella typhimurium, Salmonella enteritidis, Clostridium botulinum, Listeria monocytogenes and other Salmonella and Clostridium species.

Other Research involving Salmonella enteriditis, Salmonella typhimurium, Clostridium botulinum.

Risk and Hazard Analysis in egg infections.

Thermal destruction of Salmonella enteriditis phase type 4 in the domestic cooking of food containing eggs.

Use of Non-radioctive DNA probes for the detection of pathogenic Bacteria in food.

Enzyme-linked immunological Biosensors for detection and identification of Pathogenic Bacteria in food.

Determination of Food Constituents and contaminants by ELISA.

Heat induced thermotolerance in food Poisoning organisms.

Survey of Bacteriological Quality of goats milk.

Lysozyme destruction of Gram negative organisms in Chicken and Red meat.

Bacteriological Hazards of large meat roasts in catering and long storage of chilled foods in catering.

Detection and quantification of microorganisms in foods by novel lectin-based assays.

An investigation into the use of biosorbants for the concentration, separation and detection of low levels of food contaminants with special reference to pathogenic microorganisms such as Salmonella.

Guidelines for Pasteurisation.

Develop and investigate novel methods to separate and concentrate microorganisms from food to enhance rapid microbiological methods.

Development of design nucleic acid probes for the rapid detection of food microorganisms.

Serological diagnosis of Salmonella enteritidis infection.

Plasmid profile analysis of S. enteriditis.

Development of a Salmonella enteritidis infection Vaccine to prevent Salmonella infections in chickens.

Salmonella Service: Bacteria typing, Surveillance and work under the Protein Processing Order.

Work being carried out under the Zoonosis Order and in collaboration with the Public Health Laboratory Service.

Factors Determining Intestinal colonisation by Salmonella.

Investigating the basis of Virulence of the Salmonella genus.

Variation in virulence of Salmonellas, Host Responses to infection, Novel Vaccines and Strategies for Use.

Salmonellosis in Cattle—to determine the epidemiology in order that methods to minimize the spread of and effects of infection can be formulated and applied.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the specific arrangements for the monitoring of possible salmonella enteriditis or typhimurium, botulism and other infections in *(a)* animal feedingstuffs, *(b)* eggs and *(c)* poultry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Monitoring for the presence of salmonella eneteriditis and typhimurium in animal feedingstuffs is already carried out on a voluntary basis by many manufacturers. The Government are shortly to introduce voluntary codes of practice which require the monitoring of animal feedingstuffs and raw materials used in their manufacture. Poultry laying flocks are subject to compulsory monitoring with similar provisions to be introduced shortly for breeding flocks and hatcheries. There is no requirement to monitor for botulism toxin because botulism toxin occurs in isolated pockets and would not readily be detected.

As regards other infections, investigations are carried out by the state veterinary service at veterinary investigation centres on material submitted from private veterinary practices and other sources.

Meat Products (Contents)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what regulatory provision exists concerning the minimum meat content of pies and other meat products; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will take steps to require food manufacturers to label meat pies and other meat products so that the percentage meat content is clear.

Mr. Ryder: The Meat Products and Spreadable Fish Products Regulations 1984 already require most meat products to bear a clear declaration of their minimum meat content on the label. In addition, they contain minimum meat content requirements for a number of products including meat pies.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Class Sizes

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the average class sizes in primary and secondary education in state and private schools, respectively, in the years 1979, 1984 and 1988.

Mr. Butcher: Information on class sizes in independent schools is not collected centrally. The average class size in maintained primary and secondary schools in 1979, 1984 and 1988 were as follows:

	1979	*1984*	*1988*
Primary	25·9	24·7	25·4
Secondary	21·0	20·4	19·9

Classes relate to those taught by one teacher at a selected time on the day of the census count in January and do not necessarily represent the pattern of classes over the academic year as a whole.

Book Acquisitions

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what information the Government have on whether *(a)* the University Funding Council intends to continue its initiative to provide specific funds for the purchase of books for university libraries after 1989-90 and *(b)* it intends to extend the initiative to libraries at polytechnics and institutes of higher education;

(2) whether the Government have monitored the effect on library acquisitions of the additional funding provided in 1987-88 for university library acquisitions.

Mr. Jackson: It is for individual universities and polytechnics to decide their own priorities within the total resources at their disposal. I know of no plans by the Universities Funding Council to prolong the initiative launched by the University Grants Committee or by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council to adopt such an initiative for its sector. Universities' annual expenditure returns are monitored by the Universities Funding Council.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the levels of funding for acquisitions in polytechnic and university libraries.

Mr. Jackson: Representations have been received from the Publishers Association and the standing conference of national and university libraries, as well as from a number of hon. Members in the context of general higher education matters.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take within the new system of student finance to assist students to spend more on books.

Mr. Jackson: It is for individual students to decide what priority to accord to particular items of expenditure within the resources at their disposal. Top-up loans will increase these resources.

Research Grants

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money his Department expects to save through the withdrawal of funds for scientific research deemed near market; and how he intends to reallocate the money saved.

Mr. Jackson: This Department funds basic and strategic research through the science budget. We have not withdrawn any funding in respect of near market research.

University Applications

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how many advanced level secondary school pupils from *(a)* local education authority maintained secondary schools and *(b)* private sector maintained secondary schools applied for a place at each university in the United Kingdom in 1979 and in 1988; and how many, from each sector, each university finally accepted.

Mr. Butcher: Information on individual universities is not available. Available information for all United Kingdom universities is given in the following table.

Applications and acceptances through the Universities Central Council on Admissions of home students from England and Wales who had attempted A levels.

Type of school	*1983*		*1988*	
	Applications	*Acceptances*	*Applications*	*Acceptances*
Maintained sector				
Grammar/technical	10,247	5,320	7,731	4,588
Sixth form college	12,279	5,997	11,910	6,403
Comprehensive	50,606	22,119	41,295	20,658
Other secondary and modern	758	286	310	120
Total maintained	73,890	33,722	61,246	31,769
Independent	23,365	12,814	23,519	14,217

Library Provision

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what steps he is taking to improve the library provisions in universities and polytechnics;

(2) when he last discussed the subject of adequate funding for libraries of universities and polytechnics with the Universities Grants Committee.

Mr. Jackson: Decisions on the funding of university and polytechnic libraries are for the institutions themselves, in consultation as necessary with the relevant funding council.

Teacher Shortages

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has had any recent representations about the loss of teachers and headteachers from the profession because of *(a)* house prices and interest rates, *(b)* recent education reforms, *(c)* powers to school governors and *(d)* ability of schools to opt out.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about the effect on teacher supply of house prices in the south-east. I am not aware of representations on loss of teachers and headteachers from the profession for the other reasons listed.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress being made towards implementing the national curriculum and on whether teacher shortages are likely to delay its implementation in any area.

Mrs. Rumbold: Implementation will start this autumn, when schools must begin teaching programmes of study in maths and science to 11-year-olds and in maths, science and English to five-year-olds. Pupils aged five to 14 must also study the foundation subjects for a reasonable time. We do not expect teacher shortages to delay implementation. My Department's action programme to combat teacher shortages is designed to help local authorities and schools to recruit the teachers they need.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress being made towards implementing local management schemes for schools and how such schemes can tackle teacher shortages.

Mrs. Rumbold: Good progress is being made by local education authorities towards producing schemes of local management for submission to my right hon. Friend by 30 September. Approved schemes will be introduced from 1 April 1990. Local management will ensure the best possible match between schools' needs and the deployment of resources including the key resource of teachers.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further steps he will be taking to encourage local education authorities to organise individual financial packages to solve difficulties encountered in recruiting high-calibre teachers and heads.

Mrs. Rumbold: The interim advisory committee believes that teacher recruitment and retention measures should be flexible and precisely targeted, and that this is best achieved if they are designed locally. It recommended that authorities review their present policies to ensure that they are meeting the needs of their schools. My right hon. Friend has strongly endorsed this recommendation. Appropriate measures may include relocation and housing assistance and should embrace the flexible use of incentive allowances, an additional 27,500 of which will become available from September.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to recruit Danish and other European national qualified teachers to fill teacher vacancies in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is for local education authorities and schools, as the employer, to recruit teachers. On 21 December 1988 the Council of Ministers of the European Communities adopted a directive which will enable a range of professionals, including teachers, to have their professional qualifications recognised for the purpose of practise in member states other than their own. The directive must be implemented by 1991. My right hon. Friend proposes to make regulations according the benefits of the directive to members of the teaching profession qualified in other member states from September this year. This should assist LEAs in their recruitment of teachers from other member states. In addition, the Department has agreed to support a project to recruit and train teachers from France and West Germany, and is considering another in respect of German science teachers. Officials have put local authorities who have expressed an interest in touch with the Danish authorities.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has had in the past four months on teacher shortages region by region, subject by subject and from education authorities, headteachers or governors.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is not readily available in the form requested. My right hon. Friend has received in the past four months some 200 letters from local education authorities, headteachers, governors and parents about teacher shortages—including correspondence forwarded by hon. Members.

Maintained Primary Schools

Mr. Raison: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his best estimate of the number of children in maintained primary schools where the age of transfer is 11, 12 and 13 years, respectively.

Mr. Butcher: In January 1988 the numbers of pupils in maintained schools of the following age ranges were as follows:

Age range of schools	*Total pupils*
5-11, 7-11, 8-11	2,589,690
5-12, 8,12	255,580
9-13, 10-13, 11-13	196,350

There were no primary schools in 1988 with a transfer age of 13: all the schools shown in the table with this age of transfer were middle or secondary.

PRIME MINISTER

Official Journeys

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister when she last used *(a)* a scheduled British Rail train service and *(b)* any scheduled public transport service when travelling on official business.

The Prime Minister: February 1987. For reasons of practicality and security it is difficult for me to travel by rail on official business. I do so when a suitable opportunity arises.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Soviet Union (Emigration)

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will ascertain from the Soviet authorities the cause of the delay in the appearance of new legislation on emigration promised by the Soviet Union for the last 18 months.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are continuing to press the Soviet authorities over the urgent need for a new emigration law. We believe that this should establish clearly the principle that all Soviet citizens must be free to leave their country when they wish, and would thus—if properly implemented—provide a lasting solution to the refusenik problem.

Human Rights

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made complaining about the denial of human rights and the use of torture in the last five years in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We make frequent representations to the South African Government, both bilaterally and with our European partners, to express our concern about human rights. More detailed information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made complaining about the denial of human rights in the last five years in Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Eggar: We have made no specific representations, but the Government of Saudi Arabia are aware of our view that all Governments should respect human rights.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made complaining about the denial of human rights in the last five years in New Zealand.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made complaining about the denial of human rights in the last five years in Chile.

Mr. Eggar: We have made a number of representations about human rights to the Chilean authorities over the last five years. The precise information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made complaining about the denial of human rights in the last five years in Austria.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made complaining about the denial of human rights in the last five years in Belgium.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on recent allegations of torture in Fiji.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made in the last five years complaining about the denial of human rights and the use of torture in Yugoslavia.

Mr. Eggar: We have made a number of representations about human rights to the Yugoslav authorities over the last five years. The precise information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made in the last five years complaining about the denial of human rights and the use of torture in Paraguay.

Mr. Eggar: We have made a number of representations about human rights to the Paraguayan authorities over the last five years. The precise information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made in the last five years complaining about the denial of human rights and the use of torture in India.

Mr. Eggar: None. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 23 May.

Islamabad

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he is doing to speed up the dispatch and processing by his Department of explanatory statements prepared by the post in Islamabad and by the appellate authorities within the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I have given to his similar question today. Explanatory statements are sent to the appellate authorities by diplomatic bag and this arrangement will continue.

Responsibility for the independent appellate authority (IAA) rests with the Lord Chancellor. I understand that in 1988 the volume of cases received by the IAA increased by 60 per cent. compared with 1987 and that the volume has risen further this year. In order to cope with that considerable and unexpected rise in workload the IAA has recruited an additional four staff in the last six months. Overtime is being worked and other measures are being taken to help improve efficiency.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he is doing to speed up the processing by the post in Islamabad of explanatory statements prepared by the Home Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: In recent months staffing levels of the immigration section of the British embassy in Islamabad have been increased. On average, explanatory statements are now prepared and forwarded to the appellate authorities within four to six weeks of receipt of an appeal. Individual cases may take longer depending on what further inquiries the entry clearance officer needs to make in the light of the grounds for appeal.

Mrs. Anwar Sultana

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Mrs. Anwar Sultana, whose date of birth is 9 May 1957, and whose reference is IMM/92028, first applied to the post in Islamabad to enter the United Kingdom; and when a decision is to be taken on her application.

Mr. Eggar: In accordance with the recent guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the question to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Member will receive a reply from the unit in due course.

WALES

Research Grants

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money was provided by his Department for research into the links between pollution and human health (i) each year from 1979-89 and (ii) in the current financial year.

Mr. Grist: The Department has funded or contributed toward the costs of, a number of research projects concerned with the effects of pollution. Details of the major studies supported during the period in question are contained in the reports entitled "Research Wales" which are published annually by the Welsh Office. Copies of these reports are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much of his Department's budget is devoted to research purposes; how much is given in grants for research; and what proportion of each figure has been devoted to near market research *(a)* in the current financial year and *(b)* in each of the last three financial years.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to Tables 14a and 14b of the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development 1988", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. None of my Department's budget is devoted to near market research.

Research Grants

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the research grants given for near market research for which his Department is directly or indirectly responsible in the current financial year and each of the last two financial years.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have not made any such grants.

Drinking Water

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *416*, he will list the number of people affected and the main population centres supplied with water from supplies subject to European Community derogations; and when he now expects the need for derogations will be removed.

Mr. Grist: Supplies subject to derogations are mainly in rural areas with most of the supply areas affected being situated in Gwynedd, north Dyfed and south Powys. Information concerning the numbers of people affected is not available. The need for most of the derogations should be removed by 1990 and all by 1995 at the latest.

Welsh Development Agency (Management Buy-out)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he proposes to permit a management buy-out of the Welsh development Agency's sub-regional west Wales organisation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has received proposals for management buy-outs from the board of the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will meet the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency and indicate to him that he should forbid senior managers of the agency from working on buy-out proposals; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if, when he next meets the board of the Welsh Development Agency, he will instruct the board to cease the consideration of buy-out plans by senior managers and to improve the board's capacity to attract inward investment and to build advance factories in Wales.

(5) what is his policy concerning management buy-outs and the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have received no proposal for management buy-outs from the board of the Welsh Development Agency, though I encourage the agency to be alert to any prospect for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of its activities through greater private sector involvement in the full range of its activities.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will institute an investigation and publish a report into proposals by the Welsh Development Agency's west Wales regional director and the west Wales senior investment executive to buy out the west Wales region and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: No. This is a matter for the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of employees and the value of, or the rent of the premises of the west Wales Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Peter Walker: There are 17 full-time employees in the Welsh Development Agency's west Wales region. As at 31 March 1989 the value of premises administered by the region was £5·1 million.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if the Welsh Development Agency research, secretarial and technical facilities were used by the Welsh Development Agency employees to facilitate studies and proposals concerning management buy-out proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: As far as the Welsh Development Agency is aware, none of its research, secretarial or technical facilities was drawn on to formulate the proposals made for the west Wales region.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the senior management of the Welsh Development Agency's west Wales region first proposed to the Welsh Development Agency's chairman that there should be a management buy-out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I understand from the WDA that this particular proposal was first mentioned within the agency in October 1988.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are *(a)* the current, *(b)* the 1987, and *(c)* the 1988 budgets of the west Wales Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: These are matters for the agency, but it informs me that the expenditure budgets directly under the control of the west Wales regional office amounted to a total of £1·4 million in 1987-88 and £1·7 million in 1988-89. In the current year they will amount to £1·5 million. The figures are not, however, directly comparable due to a reorganisation of the agency's regions in July 1988. The figures also omit a number of items of major expenditure including new factory building which are controlled and accounted for by central departments of the agency.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) when he last met the west Wales Welsh Development Agency's senior investment director;

(2) when he last met the west Wales Welsh Development Agency regional director; and if he discussed management buy-outs.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am not aware that I have met these officials of the Welsh Development Agency and have certainly not discussed management buy-outs with them.

NORTHERN IRELAND

West Link (Belfast)

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action is being taken to relieve the current congestion which is occurring on West Link in Belfast in the light of the construction of the new cross-harbour bridges.

Mr. Needham: Proposals for the improvement of West Link are included as part of the highway measures in the Belfast urban area plan. The recommendations of the inspector following the public inquiry are awaited.

M1 Motorway

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are his intentions regarding the improvement of the road from the M1 motorway at Dungannon to Omagh, Strabane and Londonderry; and what is the accident rate on (i) the present road and (ii) as an average for the Province.

Mr. Needham: Proposals for the improvement of the road from the M1 motorway at Dungannon to Omagh, Strabane and Londonderry are currently under consideration. Stage I of the Omagh through pass is currently under constructon and stage I of the Strabane bypass will commence very soon.

The three year average of accidents/million vehicle kilometres on this stretch of road is 0·48. There is no national average for the Province. The United Kingdom national average is 0·35.

Dual Carriageways

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration is being given to the construction of lengths of dual carriageway or climbing lanes on arterial routes and roads to ports supporting heavy lorry traffic; and when essential schemes already commenced in stages will be completed.

Mr. Needham: The roads system in Northern Ireland is constantly under review and capital improvements are dictated by capacity demand. Each proposed scheme is subjected to a strict cost-benefit analysis which determines its priority within the roads capital works programme. Arterial routes and roads to ports are fully catered for within that programme.

Essential schemes already commenced in stages are planned for completion as follows:

Omagh through pass—1994
Enniskillen stages 1, 2 and 3—1990
Newry bypass—1994
A/26 Antrim-Ballymena stage II late 1993

Payments for Debt

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland from how many people deductions were made under the Payments for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1971 in each of the years from 1979 to 1989 inclusive.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 20 June 1989]:* The number of people from whom deductions have been made is not available, but the number of debt cases, recorded by the four main creditor bodies, in respect of which deductions were made in 1988-89 under the Payments for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1971 was 16,479. Directly equivalent information for the earlier years is not available, but I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 25 October 1988, *Official Report* at column *137*.

With effect from April 1988, the major proportion of deductions from benefits against arrears of rent, rates, electricity and gas charges have been made under the provisions of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987, and the 1988-89 figure given already referred to excludes deductions under these regulations.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Magistrates Courts

74. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what percentage of cases dealt with by magistrates courts, judgment or sentence is deferred from the original hearing; and what proposals he has to shorten the length of time between arrest and the conclusion of a case and to cut the number of appearances of individual defendants in respect of a single charge.

Mr. Hurd: In 1988 it is estimated that 76 per cent. of cases were adjourned one or more times. Measures to reduce delays include the establishment of a scrutiny of the magistrates courts service and of a committee to review the procedure of the magistrates courts; the introduction on an experimental basis of power for courts to remand defendants in custody in certain circumstances for up to 28 days at a time; the development of the magistrates courts management information system; and the progressive introduction of statutory time limits which govern the period during which an accused may be held in custody awaiting committal or trial.

Television Licences

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints his Department has received about anomalies in the application of the concessionary television licence scheme since the rules change in May 1988; and if he will give details.

Mr. Renton: Since the change in the regulations in May 1988, we have received visits from five hon. Members and 202 letters, 98 of them from hon. Members, about aspects of the concessionary TV licensing scheme. The nature of each complaint is not separately recorded, but the main points raised were whether the scheme should be extended to ordinary housing, the treatment of new residents of schemes which no longer qualified and whether the circumstances of individual housing schemes fitted the new regulations.

Miss S. A. Lawrence

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will inquire into the reasons why Miss S. A. Lawrence of 68 Sutton road, Southend whose date of birth is 1 February 1952, and who applied to his office in Croydon on 27 December 1987, and forwarded a cheque for £170, has had no notification since that time apart from an immediate acknowledgement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The Home Office received some 300,000 citizenship applications in the course of 1987, mostly in connection with the ending of certain registration rights under the British Nationality Act 1981. This led to delays in completing naturalisation that are currently around 22 months. Miss Lawrence applied for naturalisation in December 1987. Her application will reach its turn for consideration within the next few months. I am not aware of any reason for giving it priority.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to publish the results of the scrutiny of the working of section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 which was undertaken by his Department.

Mr. Hurd: The report of the scrutiny of section 11 grant is being published today, and a copy has been placed in the Library.

The Government welcome the report's thorough analysis of the way in which the system has operated. The report shows that there is still a need for special provision to help break down barriers which prevent people from the ethnic minorities from using fully their opportunities for educational, economic and social development.

We are considering further what changes need to be made to improve the effectiveness of help provided to ethnic minority communities by services funded under section 11 grant. Such services are one important means of enabling men and women from Britain's ethnic minorities to play a growing and confident part in the mainstream of our national life.

Police Stations

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* in tabular form the results of the Home Office survey conducted in December 1987 into the extent of old and sub-standard police stations in the Metropolitan police area giving the names and locations of stations which are *(a)* first class, *(b)* second class, *(c)* vulnerable and *(d)* irrecoverable.

Mr. Hurd *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* The Home Office survey focused on the extent of old and sub-standard police stations in England and Wales. Questionnaries were issued to the Metropolitan police only in respect of police stations which were in categories C and D. The total number of stations and the number in each category, have changed since 1987. The position is summarised as follows:

	Numbers
A first class	27
B second class	64
C vulnerable	58
D irrecoverable	37
Total	186

The details of the gradings of stations are as follows:

Grades of metropolitan police stations

Name	*Grade updated*
Acton	A
Addington	A
Barnes	A
Barnet	A
Brixton	A
Canon Row	A
Chigwell	A
Chingford	A
Chiswick	A
Croydon	A
East Dulwich	A
Epsom	A

Name	Grade updated
Kilburn	A
Leman Street	A
Marylebone	A
Orpington	A
Paddington Green	A
Peckham	A
Plaistow	A
South Norwood	A
Southall	A
Southgate	A
Southwark	A
Stoneleigh	A
Uxbridge	A
Wembley	A
Wimbledon	A
Albany Street	B
Arbour Square	B
Barkingside	B
Battersea	B
Belvedere	B
Biggin Hill	B
Boreham Wood	B
Brentford	B
Brick Lane	B
Catford	B
Chadwell Heath	B
Cheshunt	B
City Road	B
Collier Row	B
Dagenham	B
Ealing	B
Enfield	B
Esher	B
Feltham	B
Finchley	B
Greenwich	B
Ham	B
Hammersmith	B
Hampstead	B
Harold Hill	B
Harrow	B
Highgate	B
Holborn	B
Holloway	B
Hornchurch	B
Hounslow	B
Kennington	B
Kensington	B
Kentish Town	B
Kingsbury	B
Kingston	B
Lavender Hill	B
Lewisham	B
Limehouse	B
Loughton	B
Mitcham	B
Notting Dale	B
Ponders End	B
Poplar	B
Roehampton	B
Romford	B
Rotherhithe	B
Ruislip	B
Shepherds Bush	B
Sydenham	B
Teddington	B
Thamesmead	B
Tooting	B
Vine Street	B
Walthamstow	B
West Drayton	B
West end Central	B
West Ham	B
West Hampstead	B
West Hendon	B
West Wickham	B
Whetstone	B
Woodford	B
Worcester Park	B
Barking	C
Bethnal Green	C
Bow Road	C
Bromley	C
Camberwell	C
Carter Street	C
Chelsea	C
Cobham	C
Earlsfield	C
East Ham	C
East Molesey	C
Edgware	C
Eltham	C
Fulham	C
Gipsy Hill	C
Golders Green	C
Greenford	C
Hackney	C
Hampton	C
Harrow Road	C
Hayes	C
Heathrow	C
Hendon	C
Highbury Vale	C
Hornsey	C
Hyde Park	C
Ilford	C
Isle of Dogs	C
Islington	C
Kings Cross	C
Leyton	C
Leytonstone	C
Muswell Hill	C
Norbury	C
Pinner	C
Plumstead	C
Potters Bar	C
Putney	C
Radlett	C
Rainham	C
Richmond	C
Rochester Row	C
Shooters Hill	C
Sidcup	C
Streatham	C
Surbiton	C
Sutton	C
Tottenham	C
Tottenham Court Road	C
Tower Bridge	C
Twickenham	C
Upminster	C
Wallington	C
Wealdstone	C
Westcombe Park	C
Winchmore Hill	C
Wood Green	C
Woolwich	C
Banstead	D
Beckenham	D
Bexleyheath	D
Bow Street	D
Brockley	D
Bushey	D
Caledonian Road	D
Cavendish Road	D
Chislehurst	D
Clapham	D
Dalston	D
Deptford	D
Edmonton	D
Erith	D

Name	Grade updated
Forest Gate	D
Gerald Road	D
Harlesden	D
Kenley	D
Lee Road	D
Mill Hill	D
New Malden	D
New Southgate	D
North Woolwich	D
Northwood	D
Norwood Green	D
Notting Hill	D
Penge	D
St. Anns Road	D
St. Johns Wood	D
Staines	D
Stoke Newington	D
Sunbury	D
Waltham Abbey	D
Wandsworth	D
Wanstead	D
Welling	D
Willesden Green	D

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many student hours have been lost in recreation classes in the last three months in Her Majesty's prison, Wandsworth; and what percentage this is of the normal evening provision.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 28 June 1989]:* In the 12-week period ending 23 June 1989 a total of 3,350 student hours were lost: this represents 35 per cent. of the normal evening class provision at the establishment.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of books issued to prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Wandsworth *(a)* in the three months before fresh start and *(b)* in the last three months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 28 June 1989]:* In the 12-week period preceding the implementation of fresh start (5 June 1988) 17,797 books were issued to prisoners. In the 12-week period ending 23 June 1989 a total of 9,546 books were issued.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had with the governor of Wandsworth prison on staffing levels at the prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Staffing levels are discussed in the normal course between governors and regional management. A round of discussions on staffing levels has taken place between the governor of Wandsworth and regional staff over the last two months, and management is considering the position.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Internal Market Council

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will report on the Internal Market Council held on 14 June.

Mr. Maude: The Council adopted the electro-magnetic compatibility directive, designed to facilitate free trade in electrical apparatus by ensuring that it does not produce or receive interference. It reached common positions on the fifth amendment to the cosmetics directive; on modifications to three directives dealing with technical standards for tractors; and on the proposed regulation on the giving of security to ensure payment of customs debts (the last of these being subject to a United Kingdom parliamentary scrutiny reserve).

The Council discussed the proposed European Community mergers regulation, and the proposed directive to ensure compliance with public procurement directives. The Commission withdrew its proposal for a right of residence directive and indicated that it would now put forward new proposals on this subject shortly.

Community Charge

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether licences for telecommunications operators contain provisions enabling them to inform community charge registration officers of changes of address by telephone subscribers.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 26 June 1989]:* There are no provisions in telecommunications licences which expressly enable operators to pass on such information.

Business Development Consultancy Initiative

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the total amount of expenditure on business development consultancy initiative between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1989 and for each of the region and island authorities in Scotland.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* In the period from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989 the Department contributed £1·6 million to the cost of consultancies in Scotland under the business development consultancy initiatives. It is estimated that those consultancies not completed by 31 March 1989 will cost the Department a further £2·1 million. A breakdown of expenditure for each region and island authority in Scotland is not available.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the total number of applications *(a)* received and *(b)* approved for business development consultancy initiative between April 1988 and 31 March 1989 and for each of the region and island authorities in Scotland.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 29 June 1989]* In the period from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989, a total of 1,529 applications were received for the business development consultancy initiatives in Scotland. In the same period, 1,235 applications were approved for assisted consultancy. A breakdown of the applications received and approved for each region and island authority in Scotland is as follows:

Region/Island authority	(a) Number of applications received	(b) Number of applications approved for assisted consultancy
Borders	36	34
Central	57	46
Dumfries and Galloway	23	11

Region/Island authority	(a) Number of applications received	(b) Number of applications approved for assisted consultancy
Fife	65	53
Grampian	163	116
Highland	43	29
Lothian	239	188
Strathclyde	797	680
Tayside	101	76
Orkney	2	—
Shetland	1	—
Western Isles	2	2
Total	1,529	1,235

TRANSPORT

A33

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he is making on the upgrading of the Otterbourne to Chilworth section of the A33 trunk road to motorway standards; and when he expects the work to be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Works in advance of the main contract for the Compton to Bassett section of the M3 are proceeding satisfactorily. We hope to award the main contract shortly. Construction should be completed around the end of 1991.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied with British Rail's safety measures associated with its proposal to run the proposed high speed rail link parallel to the M20 motorway through the village of Sellindge.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail will need to satisfy the railway inspectorate on this and other safety aspects of the proposed Channel tunnel rail link. Preliminary discussions have been held.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ask British Rail to consider re-routing the proposed high speed rail link to the south of the village of Sellindge.

Mr. Portillo: That suggestion has been put to British Rail and I understand that it is looking at it, among many others.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ask British Rail to reconsider the Rachel alternative to the proposed high speed rail link.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail has indicated why it thinks that Rachel is not appropriate, but is none the less studying it.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to seek to ensure that the village of Sellindge is environmentally protected from the proposed high speed rail link.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail will need to convince both the Government and Parliament that all environmental concerns have been fully considered and, so far as is reasonably possible, met.

Community Bus Services

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will reduce the cost of registering community bus services.

Mr. Portillo: Yes. Regulations that I have made were today laid before Parliament to reduce the fees for registering or varying non-subsidised community bus services from £30 and £27 respectively to a flat charge of £10.

Nuclear Material (Rail Transport)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether any uranium is transported through Oxford by rail to Windscale or other destinations.

Mr. Portillo: The timing and routing of such consignments is a matter for British Rail. I am informed that nuclear cargoes do not normally travel via Oxford.

A33 (Accidents)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents involving injuries and deaths have taken place for each year since 1979 in each direction on the A33 between the M3 and M27.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The M3 motorway was extended south to Bar End (Winchester) in 1985. Accident statistics for the A33 trunk road are not available separately for each direction of travel. The combined figures for accidents involving death or injury are as follows:

A33 (T): M3 (A303/A30 Junction) to M27 Bassett

Year	Number of Accidents
1980	93
1981	89
1982	89
1983	91
1984	95

A33 (T): M3 (Bar End) to M27 Bassett

Year	Number of Accidents
1985	66
1986	69
1987	69
1988	68

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received following the three year review of the orange badge scheme for disabled car parking; and what consideration he is currently giving to the problems affecting 430 thalidomide victims arising from the outcome of that review and, in particular, for those with shortened arms such as Mrs. Alison Wright of Bognor Regis.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We received nearly 700 comments on the discussion paper which we issued in August 1986 setting out possible changes to the orange badge scheme. The results of the review were announced in answer to a question from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 25 April 1989, at columns *481-83*.

A number of people have understood limited press reports to mean that badges will in future be restricted to recipients of mobility allowance. We do not want to restrict eligibility to this extent. Nor do we seek to ration badges or set targets for their availability.

We have received many letters and telephone calls supporting our proposals for tackling abuse of the scheme. The idea of redesigning the badge with space for a photograph of the holder has been particularly welcomed by people with disabilities and their representative organisations.

Public concern has recently been expressed about not extending eligibility for badges to all thalidomide victims with upper limb disabilities.

We have accepted advice and representations from the statutory disabled persons transport advisory committee (DPTAC) that badges must continue to be restricted to people with permanent and severe mobility problems.

The committee's constituent organisations include the joint committee on mobility for the disabled, the Disabled Drivers Association, the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation and the Disabled Drivers Motor Club. The majority of DPTAC's members are people with disabilities.

We are taking further medical advice on the mobility problems specific to some thalidomide people.

Officials have met with the Thalidomide Trust and are in touch with the Thalidomide Society.

We hope to make an announcement shortly on the outcome of this further consultation as it effects the eligibility of thalidomide victims in relation to the mobility criteria of the scheme.

The greatest concern must be to protect the interests of those people who cannot move without the benefit of the national scheme and to avoid the growth and extension of local schemes conferring benefits only to local people.

If the national scheme further loses its value and validity, the most severely disabled will suffer badly.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will consider introducing a two-tier system in the future for disabled persons, consisting of a red badge for less serious cases of disability, together with an orange badge for priority, as at present.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* No. For the scheme to be workable it is essential that only one class of badge is issued, and is restricted to those people with the greatest mobility problems. This approach has been strongly supported by organisations representing people with disabilities following our recent detailed review of the scheme.

It has been a basis of the scheme from its inception that the issue of badges should be restricted to those most in need of the parking concessions conferred by it. This approach was endorsed in the recent review of the scheme.

The main problem with the scheme is that badges are too easy to get, not too hard. Extending eligibility to those with less serious mobility handicaps (even if the full range of parking concessions were not provided) would increase considerably the number of badge holders. This would contribute to further traffic congestion in town centres. It would make enforcement of the scheme even more difficult.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the need for orange badges by those who have deformed arms or none at all; and what reply he gave.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The consultation paper on the orange badge scheme which we issued in August 1986 discussed the possibility of extending eligibility for badges to people with severe upper limb disabilities.

This was generally opposed by those commenting on the paper. In particular, the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) argued strongly that badges should continue to be restricted to those with severe mobility problems. Most of the major organisations representing people with disabilities are members of DPTAC.

We have received several representations that badges should be issued to thalidomide victims without arms. We are taking further medical advice on whether there are any previously unknown mobility problems specific to thalidomide victims. We are in touch with the Thalidomide Trust and the Thalidomide Society.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total outstanding debt on the Severn bridge at 31 March.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* The estimated debt at 31 March 1989 was £114 million.

DEFENCE

Married Quarters

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Army married quarters have been sold on the open market during each of the past five years; and what were the net annuals proceeds from such sales.

Mr. Neubert: The number of married quarters that have been sold on the open market during each of the five years is given in the table. The net annual proceeds from such sales are identifiable only for 1988-89 and 1987-88, since records were not kept in this form prior to 1 April 1987.

Financial year	*Number of quarters sold on open market*	*Proceeds of sale £ million*
1988-89	81	2·819
1987-88	212	5·517
1986-87	326	—
1985-86	100	—
1984-85	67	—

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what circumstances and on what terms serving soldiers are able to purchase Army married quarters which are surplus to requirements.

Mr. Neubert: Surplus married quarters that are suitable for sale to individuals are offered to service personnel at a discount of 30 per cent. on the market value. In order to be eligible, service personnel must be aged 25 or over and neither they nor their spouses must have held a freehold interest in a house or other residential property, or a lease with an unexpired term of 21 years or more, since 1 December 1983. Where more than one application is made, preference is given to the applicant with the longest period of reckonable service.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Army married quarters have been made available for sale to serving soldiers in each of the past five years; and how many have been sold to *(a)* officers and *(b)* other ranks.

Mr. Neubert: Since 1 December 1983, a total of 1,195 surplus Army married quarters have been offered for sale to soldiers. A total of 339 were sold to officers and 642 to non-commissioned personnel. In the time available it has not been possible to provide a year-by-year breakdown of these figures.

Nuclear-Powered Warships Safety Committee

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the composition, role and powers of the nuclear-powered warships safety committee; who appoints it; to whom it reports; and what decision-making powers it has.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The nuclear-powered warships safety committee consists of serving and retired experts in nuclear and related fields from both within and outside the Ministry of Defence. Its members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Defence. Its terms of reference are to advise the Secretary of State and other Ministers on all public safety measures concerned with the construction, operation and maintenance of nuclear-powered warships. Although the committee has no executive powers, in practice the Ministry of Defence has always followed its advice on matters which fall within its terms of reference.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many further *(a)* deaths, *(b)* leukaemias and *(c)* multiple myelomas occurring to nuclear test veterans and to members of the control group have become known to the National Radiological Protection Board in the five years that have passed since the National Radiological Protection Board study was completed;

(2) if he will request the National Radiological Protection Board to produce an interim report examining the developments there have been since the report on nuclear test veterans was completed.

Mr. Sainsbury: At this stage, I have nothing to add to my answer to the right hon. Gentleman on 19 May 1989 at column *326*.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will discuss with the British Nuclear Tests Veterans Association the completeness of the service medical records used in the National Radiological Protection Board study of nuclear test veterans.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the right hon. Member to paragraphs 5.5, 7.5 and 8.1 of the National Radiological Protection Board report 214 of January 1988 where the completeness of service records is discussed. I can add nothing further to that.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will request the national Radiological Protection Board as part of its study of nuclear test veterans, to consult the United States scientists who provided the evidence to the United States Government on their nuclear test veterans.

Mr. Sainsbury: It would not be appropriate for the Government to instruct the NRPB on how it should conduct its work. However, I am confident that the National Radiological Protection Board, comprising independent experts, will consult whoever it feels necessary in order to further its understanding of matters relating to the nuclear test veteran studies.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what analysis was made by the National Radiological Protection Board of the incidence amongst nuclear test veterans of the 13 cancers for which the United States Government are now willing to pay compensation to their nuclear test veterans.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to tables 7.1-7.15, 8.1-8.3, and tables F1-F13 contained in the National Radiological Protection Board report 214 of January 1988 where comprehensive analyses of the information pertaining to different types of cancers are listed.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what has been the cost of obtaining information about the ill health and mortality of nuclear test veterans in the five years since the previous cut-off point;

(2) what is the estimated cost of analysing the information obtained since the cut-off date used for the first National Radiological Protection Board report on nuclear test veterans;

(3) what was the cost of the National Radiological Protection Board report on nuclear test veterans; and what proportion of it arose from establishing the names of the nuclear test veterans, their involvement in the nuclear tests and the establishment of an appropriate sample.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information is not available in the form requested. The total cost to the Ministry of Defence of the NRPB contract to date has been £540,000.

Security Firms

Mr. Hincliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether soldiers based at the Shoeburyness proof and experimental establishment, who are currently employed part-time by Centre Security Services undertaking security work at Southend civic centre have permission to undertake this additional employment.

Mr. Neubert: Approval was given to three soldiers to undertake such additional work during their off-duty hours, and two are currently engaged in it.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on allowing security firms based close to Army garrisons to employ serving Army personnel on a part-time basis.

Mr. Neubert: Any officer or soldier wishing to take up any form of off-duty employment is required to obtain approval first. Approval is granted only when the commanding officer certifies that the appointment will not interfere in any way with the applicant's military duties.

Headquarter Contracts

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the value of payments made in respect of headquarter contracts to Rolls-Royce

Ltd. and Rolls-Royce plc by his Department for goods and services destined for the British armed services in each of the six years to 31 March;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the precise amounts paid in respect of headquarter contracts to each of the following contractors by his Department for goods and services destined for the British armed services in each of the three years to 31 March 1988: *(a)* the General Electric Co. plc, *(b)* British Telecommunications plc, *(c)* Lucas Industries plc, *(d)* BTR plc, *(e)* Austin Rover Group Ltd, *(f)* Dunlop Holdings plc, *(g)* United Scientific Holdings plc, *(h)* Courtaulds plc, *(i)* Massey-Ferguson Holdings Ltd, and *(j)* Commercial Shearing Inc.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* Detailed investigation has established that a substantive answer to these questions could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Company Cars (Mileages)

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, of the 1·4 million company car drivers how many drive *(a)* less than 2,000 miles, *(b)* 2-3,000 miles, *(c)* 3-4,000 miles, *(d)* 4-5,000 miles, *(e)* 5-6,000 miles, *(f)* 6-7,000 miles, *(g)* 7-8,000 miles, *(h)* 8-9,000 miles, *(i)* 9-10,000 miles, *(j)* 10-11,000 miles, *(k)*11-12,000 miles, *(l)* 12-13,000 miles, *(m)* 13-14,000 miles, *(n)* 14-15,000 miles, *(o)* 15-16,000 miles, *(p)* 16-17,000 miles and *(q)* 17-18,000 miles annually.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that this information is not available from Inland Revenue administrative records.

Exchange Rate

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to stabilise the exchange rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's speech in the Opposition day debate on Government economic policy on 7 June at columns 247-322.

European Monetary System

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has had recent discussions with the Spanish Minister of Finance on questions affecting membership of the European monetary system.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has regular discussions on a wide range of subjects with his EC Finance Minister colleagues, including the Spanish Minister of Finance.

Investment

Mr. Hind: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out in tabular form the growth of total investment in the United Kingdom in the 1980s, together with the comparable figures for each of the other major European countries.

Mr. Lilley: The information is as follows:

Percentage increase in Total Gross Fixed Capital Formation 1980-88

	Percentage
United Kingdom	39·1
Germany	4·4
France	6·7
Italy	11·1
Spain	33·6
Netherlands	17·1
Belgium	3·1

Source: CSO 1988 National Accounts Blue Book and 20 June press release for United Kingdom. For other countries OECD National Accounts Volume I for 1980-1987 figures, 1988 figures from OECD Economic Outlook June 1989.

Premium Bonds

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on his decision to introduce a minimum £100 purchase of premium bonds.

Mr. Lilley: I have received a number of representations. I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave on 5 May to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) explaining the reasons for this decision, *Official Report*, column *255*.

Investment Income Surcharge

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to restore the investment income surcharge.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No.

City Earnings

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the total earnings by the City since 1965 in *(a)* the European Community, *(b)* the United States of America, *(c)* Japan and *(d)* the rest of the world.

Mr. Lilley: The data requested are not available.

Output Statistics

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his latest figures for output per hour worked in the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan.

Mr. Lilley: The April 1989 Treasury economic progress report presented estimates which show that output per hour worked in the United Kingdom economy in 1986 was about 50 per cent. higher than in Japan and about 5 per cent. lower than in Germany.

Banking System (Complaints)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to establish a statutory system to replace the banking ombudsman in the light of public disquiet over the treatment of complaints relating to automatic telling machines.

Mr. Lilley: The report of the review committee on banking services law and practice, under the chairmanship of Professor Robert Jack, was published by command (Cm 622) on 23 February 1989. The committee has made 83 recommendations covering a number of banking issues including the banking ombudsman scheme. The Government are carefully examining these recommendations and will set out their detailed response in due course.

VAT

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the value added tax charge on the self-supply of new construction introduced by amendments to schedule 3 of the Finance Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I have received a number of written representations and met representatives of universities, independent schools and banks. In the light of these representations, I have decided to table further amendments for the Report stage of the Finance Bill which will tax the exempt use of new buildings on the basis of the historic cost of land plus the cost of construction.

Independent Taxation

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements have been made to publicise the effects of independent taxation.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* A major programme of publicity for independent taxation is already under way. The first stage of the programme began in March and April this year to coincide with the issue of about 1 million extra tax returns for 1989-90. These returns will help the Inland Revenue divide married couples' income and tax reliefs correctly for the new system. Each return was accompanied by special message briefly outlining independent taxation and its effects and explaining the importance of completing the returns. Posters about the returns and independent taxation were also displayed in post offices, libraries and other locations. The Inland Revenue has published four new leaflets about the new system to give general guidance to taxpayers. These leaflets are available from tax offices and tax inquiry centres.

Further publicity is planned during the coming months and will focus on ensuring that taxpayers, particularly married women, are aware of the change and its implications for them.

Tax Returns

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people will be issued with personal tax returns by the Inland Revenue in 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 27 June 1989]:* The number of people sent personal tax returns in 1988-89 was 9·098 million. It is expected that the figures for 1989-90 and 1990-91 will be:

	million
1989-90	10·188
1990-91	11·400

Personal Incomes

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give (i) the total unearned and (ii) the total earned income of *(a)* the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the top 5 per cent., *(c)* the top 10 per cent., *(d)* the top 20 per cent., *(e)* the top 25 per cent., *(f)* the bottom 50 per cent., *(g)* the bottom 70 per cent. and *(h)* all taxpayers in the years 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 27 June 1989]:* Estimates are given in the table. They are based on a projection of the 1986-87 survey of personal incomes and are provisional. All estimates are subject to a large degree of uncertainty since some investment income on which tax is deducted at source is not reflected in the survey.

Total Investment Income and Earned Income

£ billion

Group of Income Tax Payers	*1988-89*		*1989-90*	
	Investment Income	*Earned Income*	*Investment Income*	*Earned Income*
Top 1 per cent.	4·3	14·7	5·0	16·0
Top 5 per cent.	8·2	43·0	9·7	46·9
Top 10 per cent.	10·5	69·0	12·5	75·1
Top 20 per cent.	13·7	108·8	16·5	118·5
Top 25 per cent.	14·9	125·6	18·0	136·6
Bottom 70 per cent.	10·2	119·5	12·4	129·4
Bottom 50 per cent.	6·6	69·4	8·0	74·8
All taxpayers	26·1	260·2	31·7	282·1

Territorial Army (Earnings)

Mr. Soames: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidance is given to tax inspectors on the treatment of earnings from the Territorial Army for unemployed men receiving benefit.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 26 June 1989]:* I can assure my hon. Friend that inspectors of taxes are given appropriate guidance to ensure that the earnings of all taxpayers are taxed correctly. If he has a particular case in mind, and would let me have the details, I shall be happy to look into it.

Income Tax

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the proportion of income taxpayers falling into the higher-rate and basic-rate bands, by region, for the last full year for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 27 June 1989]:* The table gives estimates of the proportion of tax units (married couples and single people) with liability to income tax for 1986-87, the latest available year, at basic rate only and at higher rates. The estimates are based on a sample survey, and their reliability is limited by the size of the sample available, particularly in regions where the total number of taxpayers is relatively small such as Northern Ireland and East Anglia.

Region	*Proportion of taxpaying tax units liable to tax at:*	
	Basic rate only *Per cent.*	*Higher rates* *Per cent.*
North	96·3	3·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	95·7	4·3
North West	95·7	4·3
East Midlands	95·9	4·1
West Midlands	96·4	3·6
East Anglia	95·6	4·4
South East	91·9	8·1
South West	95·0	5·0
Wales	95·7	4·3
Scotland	95·4	4·6
Northern Ireland	93·9	6·1

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing total sums raised under the business expansion scheme, by region, for the last full year for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 27 June 1989]:* Provisional estimates of regional investment through the business expansion scheme for the year 1987-88 are as follows:

Region	*1987-88* *£ million*
England	
South East	134
East Anglia	8
South West	15
West Midlands	8
East Midlands	3
Yorkshire and Humberside	5
North and North-West	6
Wales	2
Scotland	11
Northern Ireland	1
Total	194

Notes

1. The estimates represent investment in 1987-88. Some money raised by BES approved funds during 1987-88 may not be invested until 1988-89.
2. Each company is allocated to a region by the address of its registered office; it may conduct business elsewhere.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disabled People (Benefits)

3. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to review social security benefits for disabled people.

24. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has for involving disabled people and their organisations in the review of disability benefits.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to consult disability organisations about the review of disability benefits.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend, the right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Lady to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) earlier today.

32. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, in the light of the Social Security Advisory Committee's report "Benefits for Disabled People: A Strategy For Change" he plans to increase spending on disability benefits.

38. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the financial terms of reference of the disability benefits review.

52. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to increase spending on disability benefits.

53. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what response he has made to the comments of the Social Security Advisory Committee, in its report entitled "Benefits for Disabled People: A Strategy for Change" that reforming the system unavoidably means putting in new resources.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, in light of the Social Security Advisory Committee's report "Benefits for Disabled People: A Strategy for Change" he will increase spending on benefits for disabled people.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what additional resources he plans to make available for disability benefits.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend and the right hon. and hon. Members to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) earlier today.

Agencies

10. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how his Department's agencies will affect the work of social security staff.

Mr. Moore: Agencies will mean exciting new opportunities for our staff. They will have clearer targets and greater flexibility to provide an improved service to the public, and their pay will be matched to their success in doing so.

16. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the introductions of his Department's agencies will affect staff training.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Training will be more sharply focused on the specific aims and objectives of the agencies, with a particular emphasis on management training, to reflect the greater devolution of responsibilities which agencies will bring.

29. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further agencies are envisaged for his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 17 May 1989, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced plans for the establishment of an information technology services agency by April 1990; a national insurance contributions unit by April 1990; a benefits administration agency by April 1991. A further agency, the resettlement units executive agency, has already been established.

Pensioners (Home Ownership)

14. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of pensioners own their own homes outright.

Mr. Moore: In 1986 about 48 per cent. of pensioners owned their own homes, of which only 4 per cent. had a mortgage and paid interest. This means 96 per cent. of pensioners did not pay mortgage interest.

31. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of pensioners are owner-occupiers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In 1986, a total of 48 per cent. of pensioners were owner-occupiers; of those, 92 per cent. owned their homes outright.

Attendance Allowance

15. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are receiving the higher rate of attendance allowance at the latest available date; and what was the comparable figure for 1979.

Mr. Scott: An estimated 310,000 people were receiving the higher rate of attendance allowance at any one time in 1988-89. The corresponding figure for 1978-79 was 122,000.

33. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to improve the attendance allowance system.

Mr. Scott: We are constantly seeking to improve the working of the attendance allowance system. We have substantially reduced the average time taken to decide new attendance allowance claims from 12·5 weeks in 1983 to 7·5 weeks currently. This year we are spending almost £1,200 million on attendance allowance, an increase of 230 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79. The reports of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys disability surveys will help us judge how well the substantial current expenditure is targeted and whether there are better ways of helping those in greatest need.

Pensions

17. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many European Community countries pay flat-rate retirement pensions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Within the European Community, only the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland pay flat-rate retirement pensions. So far as the United Kingdom is concerned, that means that all pensioners are provided with a secure foundation for retirement. In countries that rely on earnings-related schemes low earners receive low pensions and very low earners have very low pensions.

Benefits (Uprating)

18. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he intends to take to compensate those who are currently losing because of the disparity between inflation and the uprating increase.

Mr. Moore: In April, benefits were fully uprated in line with the movement in prices over the 12 months to September 1988. In the same way, the next uprating will take account of the movement in prices between September 1988 and September 1989. The use of the historic method for uprating is much fairer than the previous forecasting method. A switch to the forecasting method in 1976 meant that pensioners were not compensated for the price increases of 6 per cent. between March 1975 to November 1975. That meant pensioners got over £1 billion less, in today's prices, than they would have done.

41. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he intends to take to compensate those who are currently losing because of the disparity between inflation and the uprating increase.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's reply to the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) earlier today.

Living Standards

19. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much the average living standards of couples with children has increased since 1979.

Mr. Scott: From 1979 to 1985, the average living standards of couples with children improved by 9 per cent. This improvement is larger than for couples without children or single people. Both these groups had improvements in their living standards of 6 per cent.

Child Benefit

20. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families in receipt of child benefit contain an earner of more than twice national average male earnings; and what proportion of all such earners are part of a family unit receiving child benefit.

Mr. Scott: On the basis of the 1986 family expenditure survey, a little over 300,000 families in receipt of child benefit contained an earner of more than twice average earnings, representing just over a half of all such earners. Information about the incomes of families receiving child benefit is not routinely collected. Estimates are subject to normal sampling and response variation.

Benefits

21. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are in receipt of social security benefits.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are a large number of different social security benefits serving different purposes and giving different sorts of help to different groups of people. The estimated average numbers receiving each of the various benefits in 1988-89 are:

	1988-89 Thousands
Retirement Pension	9,720
Widows' benefit	385
Unemployment benefit	620
Sickness benefit	110
Invalidity benefit	1,130
Industrial disablement benefit	210
Industrial death benefit	25
Maternity allowance	15
Non-contributory retirement pension	35
War pension	255
Attendance allowance	760
Invalid care allowance	100
Severe disablement allowance	265
Mobility allowance	530
Income Support	4,215
Child benefit—numbers of children[1]	12,030
Child benefit—number of families	6,755
One parent benefit	680
Family credit	285
Housing benefit[2]	
rent rebate	3,100
rent allowance	925
rate rebate[3]	5,105

Notes:
[1]Numbers of children in families receiving child benefit, including those also receiving one parent benefit.
[2]Most households getting assistance with rent will also be in receipt of a rate rebate.
[3]Includes estimates of people receiving community charge rebates in Scotland.

At any one time, people can receive more than one social security benefit and there are cases where people (eg parents) receive benefits for others (children). In 1987, the latest year for which an estimate is available, social security benefits made some contribution to the incomes or family incomes of some 38 million men, women and children—about 70 per cent of the population of Great Britain.

26. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will make it his policy to commence payment to anyone granted *(a)* housing benefit or *(b)* any other form of social security benefit with effect from the date from which the need for that benefit can be shown to date.

Mr. Scott: No. There are prescribed times for claiming housing benefit and other social security benefits some of which may be extended for up to 12 months before the date of claim where the claimant proves there was good cause for the failure to claim timeously.

National Insurance

22. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what effect the current increase in earnings will have on national insurance fund contributions.

Mr. Scott: We expect that the current increase in earnings will increase the income of the national insurance fund by about £500 million compared with estimates published last autumn. The Budget measures on national insurance contributions and the abolition of earnings rule will cost the fund a net £1 billion in 1989-90. The national insurance fund's income from contributions is expected to be about £28·2 billion in the current year.

46. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the percentage increase in contributions to the national insurance fund anticipated in the current year as a result of the increase in earnings.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The percentage increase in receipts from national insurance contributions to the national insurance fund resulting from the expected increase of earnings in 1989-90 is expected to be 9 per cent. in cash terms. This estimate is based on receipts net of statutory sick pay, statutory maternity pay and personal pension rebates, but includes premiums paid to the state scheme by occupational pension schemes. It also take account of the changes announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his Budget speech.

Pensioners (Income)

23. **Mr. Neil Hamilton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of pensioners have investment income.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In 1986, a total of 70 per cent. of all pensioners, and 85 per cent. of recently retired pensioners received investment income.

27. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of pensioners have income from some source other than state benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In 1986 just over 80 per cent. of pensioners were in receipt of income from a source other than state benefits.

34. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, by how much pensioners' income from savings has increased since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Pensioners' average total net income from savings increased by 64 per cent. in real terms between 1979 and 1986.
Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1986.

Transitional Payments Unit

25. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to what factors he ascribes the staff effort required to process each application to the housing benefit transitional payments unit having been three times greater than expected.

48. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to what factors he ascribes the staff effort required to process each application to the housing benefit transitional payments unit having been three times greater than expected.

51. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to what factors he ascribes the staff effort required to process each application to the housing benefit transitional payments unit having been three times greater than expected.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The staff effort required in the transitional payments unit was not three times greater than expected. An early planning estimate was made of the number of staff who would be needed at the transitional payments unit which proved to be an underestimate for two main reasons: the difficulty of estimating staff numbers in a wholly new area of work before detailed procedures had been worked out; and the fact that many of those employed in the transitional payments unit lacked any previous work experience. The general running costs of the unit in 1988-89 will be less than half the original estimate.

Carers

28. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated annual saving to his Department from the existence of a network of informal carers.

Mr. Scott: This information is not available.

Claimants

30. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which categories of claimants or potential claimants he has identified as being in greatest need.

47. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which categories of claimants or potential claimants he has identified as being in greatest need.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We recognised that less well-off families with children—those on income-related benefits-needed extra help. Income support and housing benefit include premiums providing extra help to families, lone parents and disabled children. Family credit provides more generous help to working families with modest earnings. In all three benefits, the amounts provided for children vary with their ages. In this year's uprating extra help, over and above the £2·1 billion needed to maintain the value of benefits, of 50p per child per week (worth £70 million in total) was provided for some 3 million children living in around 1·5 million families.

Income support and housing benefit include premiums recognising the extra needs of pensioners and disabled claimants. The independent living fund provides financial help to enable severely disabled people who are receiving income support or have low incomes to pay for the personal care and domestic support they need to maintain an independent life in the community.

From July we are introducing measures to provide extra help for 16 and 17-year-olds who are forced to live independently which is worth up to £6·60 a week for these on income support and up to £5·61 a week for those on housing benefits only. From October we are directing extra help to elderly and disabled pensioners, costing nearly £200 million in a full year and worth up to £2·50 a week for single people and up to £3·50 for couples.

North-West Office

35. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of staff employed by his Department in the Department of Social Security north-west office.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The total number of staff employed in the north-western regional office is 647.

Social Security Spending

36. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what amount spending in real terms on social security programmes has increased over the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: Spending on social security in 1989-90 is forecast to be £51·1 billion in current plans, while in 1984-85 it was £38·1 billion. Despite a drop in unemployment of almost one third, with the consequential effect on expenditure on that group, overall social security spending has increased by 3·4 per cent. in real terms in the last five years.

42. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the percentage of public expenditure spent on social security benefits now; and what it was in 1979.

Mr. Scott: The percentage of public expenditure spent on the social security programme in 1989-90 is forecast to be 30 per cent. on current plans, while in 1979-80 it was 24 per cent.

Family Credit

37. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the advertising cost for each successful new claim for family credit, above expected trends, received as a result of the recent advertising campaign.

50. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the notional advertising cost for each successful new claim for family credit, above expected trends, that has been received as a result of the advertising campaign.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Such cost estimates would not be meaningful. It is not possible to assess accurately how much of the increase in claims has been a direct result of the advertising campaign rather than other factors such as the increase in family credit rates in April. Furthermore, the campaign aims to raise levels of awareness of family credit not only to encourage claims by people who may be entitled at present but to encourage others to claim in the future should they become eligible through changed circumstances.

In terms of the objective of increasing awareness within the target groups, there have been significant increases.

Research indicates a change from 25 to 82 per cent. awareness. This is matched by increases in applications. In the weeks before the campaign we had 164,000 applications. In the 11 weeks after the campaign started we had 295,000 claims and of the claims decided since the campaign began over 135,000 have been successful and 86,400 further claims are awaiting decision.

The cost of advertising and other promotion of family credit since April to the end of July is approximately £4·8 million.

43. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has received regarding the take-up of family credit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Representations are usually to the effect that it needs to be improved. The recent advertising campaign has sought to increase public awareness of family credit and so promote increased take-up.

Advertising

39. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has undertaken an up-to-date assessment of any improvements in take-up ratios on targeted benefits following the completion of the spring advertising campaign launched by his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The precise effects on family credit take-up rates will not be known until information is available from the 1989 family expenditure survey, but the increase in the number of claims received during the campaign has been very encouraging and the underlying caseload is now almost certainly over 300,000.

Pensioners (Living Standards)

40. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much the average living standards of pensioners have increased since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Between 1979 and 1986 pensioners' average total net income increased by 23 per cent. in real terms.

Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1986.

Social Fund

44. **Mr. Kirkwood** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have been refused loans by social fund officers on the basis that they have insufficient income to repay the loans.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There were 18,931 loan applications refused for this reason in the period April 1988 to May 1989.

Social Security Fraud

45. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many personnel are involved in the detection of fraud in social security benefits; and what is the total expenditure by his Department in this area.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Precise figures are not available, but it is possible to estimate the numbers of full-time equivalent posts on the basis of records of staff time expended on fraud-related work. The numbers of full-time equivalent posts are 3,335. Data for the total expenditure by the Department in this area are not available. Staff costs are now some £47 million in a full year.

Mobility Allowance

49. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent discussions he has had with pensioners' groups on extending the age after which mobility allowance can be paid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I met a delegation from Pensioners Voice on 13 June, when the age limit for mobility allowance was one of the matters discussed.

Prescription Charges (Exemptions)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representation he has received about the operations of the Agency Benefits Unit regarding its processing of applications for exemption from prescription charges; what improvements in service to applicants can be expected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Agency Benefits Unit deals with claims made under the National Health Service low income scheme which provides help with the whole range of National Health Service charges and fares to hospital for treatment. Each claim under the scheme covers all these services, including exemption from prescription charges, so that separate information about the latter cannot be given.

On the operation of the low income scheme generally, apart from many letters about the amount of help provided in individual cases, most representations have concerned the amount of time taken to deal with claims. A major cause of delay earlier in the year was a problem which arose in connection with the regulations governing the low income scheme, and which led to a stockpiling of cases at the unit. All the cases which had been stockpiled were cleared by the middle of April, but work is still in progress to correct the cases which had been dealt with before the stockpiling began.

Representations have also been made about the claim form, and the design of the form is currently under review. The opportunity will also be taken to correct weaknesses in the form which have sometimes led to delays due to forms having to be returned to claimants because they were not properly completed.

Elderly People (Income Support)

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the projected increase in cost of income support for elderly people in private residential and nursing home accommodation in the next five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available, but forecasts of public expenditure on income support as a whole are contained in the public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total amount paid in income support to elderly people in private residential and nursing home accommodation for each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows estimated expenditure on payments of supplementary benefit income support to elderly people in private and voluntary

residential care and housing homes; information for private homes only is not available. Before December 1985 such data were not collected.

Date	Annual equivalent expenditure £ million
December 1985	280
May 1986	360
May 1987	530
May 1988	680

Source: December 1985, May 1986, May 1987 and May 1988 Quarterly Statistical Enquiries.
Note:
The amounts for 1985-7 relate to supplementary pensions, and that for 1988 to payments of income support to people aged 60 or more.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy towards the payment of independent living fund grants in order to substitute for National Health Service services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Decisions are a matter for the trustees of the fund. Payments from the fund complement the provision made for severely disabled people by the statutory authorities and are not intended to replace them.

War Widows

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to be able to respond to the further representations which he has received about the plight of the pre-1973 war widows.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My noble Friend has recently responded to representations made by the Officers' Pension Society and several hon. Members. Officials have provided a note to the Social Services Committee on the points raised on this subject at the hearing on 14 June. There are no other representations awaiting a reply.

Young Claimants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the total number of 16 and 17-year-olds in Scotland and for each of the local Department of Social Security office areas who have *(a)* applied and *(b)* received income support as a result of direction from the Secretary of State under the severe hardship provision from September 1988 to the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows the number of applications for income support from 16 and 17-year-olds in Scotland on the ground of "severe hardship" between 12 September 1988 and 23 June 1989. It also shows the number of directions given to enable income support to be paid.

(1) DSS Local Office	(2) Decisions taken	(3) Directions to enable benefit to be paid
Aberdeen		
North	67	30
South	154	105
Airdrie	45	30
Arbroath	40	24
Ayr	24	13
Bathgate	225	173
Bellshill	75	56
Campbeltown	13	9
Clydebank	15	6
Coatbridge	6	4
Cowdenbeath	61	33
Dumbarton	59	42
Dumfries	48	34
Dundee		
East	29	14
West	17	10
Dunfermline	98	79
East Kilbride	36	27
Edinburgh		
City	74	54
East	103	78
North	70	47
South	84	62
West	89	62
Elgin	69	47
Falkirk	173	114
Fort William	13	11
Galashiels	103	69
Glasgow		
Anniesland	66	43
Bridgeton	61	41
City	76	46
Craigton	62	46
Cranstonhill	27	25
Cumbernauld	39	28
Laurieston	142	93
Maryhill	91	63
Parkhead	85	50
Patrick	31	17
Provan	164	120
Rutherglen	129	68
Southside	49	33
Springburn	87	63
Greenock	73	48
Hamilton	40	30
Inverness	29	21
Irvine	90	55
Johnstone	9	1
Kilmarnock	88	62
Kirkcaldy	109	79
Kirkwall	12	9
Lerwick	5	5
Leven	47	27
Motherwell	36	23
Oban	9	6
Paisley	142	104
Perth	85	58
Peterhead	47	30
Port Glasgow	37	25
Stirling	86	54
Stornoway	37	21
Stranraer	14	10
Wick	2	1
Total	3,916	2,640

Notes:
1. Based on 100 per cent. count of applications received.
2. Information relates to the number of applications received rather than to the number of individual young people involved. Some individuals may have received more than one direction.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the number of 16 and 17-year-olds

claiming benefit in Scotland and for each of the Department of Social Security local area offices in each of the months June, July, August and September 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the total number of 16 and 17-year-olds in Scotland who have been exempt from the withdrawal of entitlement to benefit covering lone parents, registered blind, incapable of work by reason of disease or mental or physical disability, pregnancy or couple married with a child in the period September 1988 to the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Fife, Central of 7 November, *Official Report*, columns *99-100*, if he will outline the findings of the monitoring of the changed social security benefit arrangements for young people seeking a YTS place in the period September 1988 to June 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The benefits involved in the changed arrangements for young people from September 1988 were income support and child benefit.

As far as income support is concerned, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) on 16 March at columns *305-06* and to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on 13 March at columns *27-28*.

The changes in child benefit arrangements in the period July 1988 to June 1989 resulted in 418,000 invitations to claim extended child benefit being issued to the parents of those leaving school at summer or Christmas 1988 or Easter 1989. Payment of extended child benefit was made in 43,000 cases where young persons were registered for work or a YTS place.

I am satisfied that the Training Agency has more than sufficient YTS places for all who want one. On 31 May (the latest figure available) there were over 141,000 unfilled places. Arrangements are in place at a local level with the careers service to ensure that the Training Agency is aware of and can satisfy demand for YTS places.

HEALTH

Water (Contamination)

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, as a matter of urgency, he will direct the Chief Medical Officer to provide a second opinion on the risk to human health of chironomidae in water, including drinking water supplies.

Mr. Freeman: The Chief Medical Officer has sought expert advice on this matter. The advice is that there is no evidence that when these larvae have been found in drinking water supplies they have ever caused a human health hazard.

Re-Solv

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further plans he has to support the work of Re-Solv.

Mr. Freeman: Earlier this year I met colleagues from other Departments with an interest in solvent misuse to discuss the Government's strategy for tackling the problem. At that meeting we recognised the valuable work undertaken by Re-Solv. We agreed that half the cost of the Re-Solv director's salary over the next three years would be met by Government. The Department of Health is, in addition, making a grant of £50,000 in 1989-90 to Re-Solv to undertake a range of activities to combat solvent misuse. That amount includes a contribution towards the cost of the full-time director for the first year of appointment.

Hospitals (Management Arrangements)

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will report further on his intention to introduce new management arrangements for the special hospitals service, as outlined in the ministerial statement of 4 May 1988.

Mr. Freeman: With the agreement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department, the new Special Hospitals Service Authority came into being on 1 July 1989. Initially, the authority will work with the Department, and the Home Department, in formulating national policies for the service; in finalising the new arrangements; and in preparing the way for senior managerial appointments and for the handover of the functions currently discharged by the Department and the three existing local hospital boards. Further measures will be taken in due course to enable the authority to assume full responsibility for the service, from 1 October 1989. At that stage the Department will relinquish all its operational management responsibilities and the local boards will cease to exist, to be replaced as soon as possible by new local arrangements.

As well as its administrative responsibilities, a primary task of the authority will be to determine policies and priorities within the strategic framework provided by the Government's stated objectives for the further development of the service. These include the overriding need to continue to ensure the safety of the public; to continue to improve standards of treatment and care; and to forge closer and more effective links between the special hospitals and the services to which they relate—the hospital and community psychiatric services and the prison medical service. It was with the achievement of those objectives in mind that my right hon. and learned Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department agreed on the need to strengthen the management of the service, both in terms of the establishment of a central special health authority, and the introduction of general management.

The new arrangements will provide an improved environment in which roles and relationships, and lines of accountability, are more clearly defined and in which better-informed decisions can be taken on key issues—including the quality of the lives of patients, and the use of resources.

I am pleased to announce that Dr. David Edmond, the present chairman of the Rampton hospital board, has

accepted an invitation to serve as chairman of the new authority. He comes to the job with a proven track record both in the service itself, and in industry, and his knowledge, experience and deep commitment to the service will stand him in good stead in taking on this demanding appointment. The membership of the authority will be announced shortly.

Blood Donors

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action can be taken by donors to the blood transfusion service to ensure that the blood they supply is used exclusively within the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: The national blood transfusion service meets non-NHS hospitals' reasonable requests for blood according to availability and clinical need.

The suggestion that donors should impose conditions is not only contrary to this principle but is impracticable in a service dealing with over 2 million units of blood each year.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria have been issued to district health authorities to prevent specifications on competitive tendering being drafted in such a way as to facilitate the application of a specified firm.

Mr. Freeman: A wide range of guidance has been issued on the importance of openness in tendering. For example, the Department's guide "Option Appraisal: Medical and Scientific Equipment", published in 1988, advises that a range of equipment should be identified that appears to satisfy the functional requirements and that requirement specifications should not include performance features that would effectively limit the choice to only one model unless there is clear agreement by all concerned that they are genuinely essential. The Department's procurement directorate will offer health authorities advice on available choices, where required.

Children Bill

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received seeking information as to when he envisages that part VIII of the Children Bill *[Lords]* will be implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* We have had a few representations on this particular point in the past year. I refer the hon. Member to what my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor said on implementation of the Bill generally in the other place on 6 December at columns 534-35.

NHS Grading

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what percentages of cases in each of the last three years where upgrading of National Health Service staff was approved by the Whitley council joint secretaries the award was backdated to the date of application.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. If my hon. Friend has a particular case in mind he might wish to let me have the specific details.

Self-governing Hospitals

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether maternity services will be included as part of the core services to be provided by self-governing hospitals.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 21 June 1989]:* Exactly what core services different self-governing hospitals will provide will vary according to the facilities that they have available, the services other local hospitals provide and local requirements. Where, however, a self-governing hospital can best provide maternity services to which patients need guaranteed local access, it will be required to do so.

SCOTLAND

Fish Farming

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the members of the committee appointed to advise the Crown Estate Commissioners on fish farming; if he will describe their remit; and if he will state their remuneration and criteria for appointment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend was happy to announce on 30 May the appointments of the hon. Lord Grieve and Professor George Dunnet to the chairmanship and deputy chairmanship respectively of the fish farming advisory committee being established by the Crown Estate. Background to the appointments is contained in Scottish Office news release 30 May/0948/89 copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House. The other members of the committee will be representatives of the relevant public bodies. Details of the bodies to be represented and the remit of the committee were contained in the reply my right hon. and learned Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on 19 December at columns *88-89*. The question of remuneration is a matter for the Crown Estate.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to reply to the letter from Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Link on fish farming, dated 30 January.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My officials met Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Link and discussed in depth the issues raised in the letter. We shall be keeping Link informed of developments.

Heritage and Culture

Mr. Greg. Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for further promoting Scotland's heritage and culture.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government's booklet "Scotland's Heritage" was published on 9 June and copies were placed in the Library. This made it clear that our policy has been, and will remain, to support the conservation of Scotland's heritage and to promote wide public appreciation and understanding of Scotland's rich

and diverse culture. Amongst many initiatives giving effect to this policy, my right hon. and learned Friend announced on 9 June a commitment in principle to the development of a museum of Scotland which would exhibit the natural, social, economic and cultural history of Scotland.

Crofts

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what area of land was under crofting tenure in *(a)* 1976, *(b)* 1983 and *(c)* 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In 1976 about 881,000 hectares of inbye and common grazings land were registered as being in crofting tenure. Since then about 15,000 hectares, mainly inbye land, have been decrofted.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the European Commission's proposal to limit the payment of the hill livestock compensatory allowance to 25 per cent. for the first 45 livestock units and 12·5 per cent. for the next 45 units.

Mr. Rifkind: We have received representations from several right hon. and hon. Members, the National Farmers Union of Scotland and the Scottish Landowners Federation expressing concern about the European Commission's proposals for changes to the hill livestock compensatory allowance arrangements.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, in the event of the European Commission's proposal to limit the payment of the hill livestock compensatory allowance to 25 per cent. for the first 45 livestock units and 12·5 per cent. for the next 45 units becoming effective, the Government will consider funding the deficit for Scottish farms.

Mr. Rifkind: Negotiations on the Commission's proposals—which are part of a package of measures relating to reform of the structural funds—have only just begun. It is premature to consider what action the Government might take if the proposals were to be adopted unchanged, but I can give a categorical assurance that in the negotiations we shall be seeking to ensure that full account is taken of the structure of farming in the less-favoured areas of Scotland.

Wetlands

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to announce the designation of an area either as a site under the Ramsar convention on the conservation of wetlands of international importance or as a special protection area under EC directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds, or both.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The next classification of a site will be announced as soon as the necessary consultations have been completed.

Dental Schools

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the involvement of his Department in announcing on 22 June the plans for the future of Scotland's three dental schools.

Mr. Rifkind: I was extremely concerned at the premature and regrettable disclosure in a television programme on 22 June of the recommendations of the report of the working party on dental provision in Scotland, chaired by Sir Donald McCallum. My Department was, of course, not involved in that disclosure.

Nurses

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by district health authority *(a)* the current nursing staff establishment, *(b)* the number in post at the latest available date and *(c)* the number who have left the National Health Service in the preceding year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no district health authorities in Scotland. The equivalent is a health board. The whole-time equivalent number of nursing staff employed in each health board at 30 September 1988 is set out in the table. Information about nursing staff establishments is not held centrally and the number of nursing staff who leave the NHS could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

	Number
Scotland	63,782·4
CSA	196·4
Argyll and Clyde	4,782·7
Ayrshire and Arran	3,376·0
Borders	1,146·6
Dumfries and Galloway	1,856·9
Fife	3,598·5
Forth Valley	3,530·7
Grampian	6,030·5
Greater Glasgow	15,283·4
Highland	2,369·8
Lanarkshire	5,391·4
Lothian	9,471·1
Orkney	197·1
Shetland	221·0
Tayside	6,034·7
Western Isles	295·6

Art, Craft and Design Teaching

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to bring craft and design education into the curriculum for Scottish schools; what plans there are for the teaching of art; and by what date he expects such subjects to be part of the curriculum.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Current guidance for secondary schools is that the curriculum of every pupil up to the age of 16 should include subjects within the modes designated creative and aesthetic activity, which includes art, and technological activity and applications, which includes craft and design. Scottish certificate of education courses are available in both subjects at O-grade, standard grade and higher levels. Art and design may be taken at the level of certificate of sixth-year studies. Consideration is being given to the introduction of a certificate of sixth-year studies course in craft and design. Craft and design and art are also aspects of the primary curriculum, which is presently being reviewed.

Community Care

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to make an announcement on his plans for community care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend plans to announce his proposals for community care in Scotland at the same time as decisions are announced on the Griffiths report. As has been indicated in the House, this will be before the summer recess.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of *(a)* botulism, *(b)* salmonella enteriditis, *(c)* salmonella typhimurium and *(d)* other types of food poisoning have been reported or detected in Scotland for each month since January.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of food poisoning cases reported during 1989 are as follows:

	Number
January	150
February	181
March	114
April	165
May	160
June	255

The cause is not always known but those recorded include:

	Botulism	*Salmonella enteriditis*	*Salmonella typhimurium*
January	Nil	54	32
February	Nil	85	31
March	Nil	60	21
April	Nil	43	9
May	Nil	81	27
June	Nil	96	32

Scottish Constitutional Convention

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is now taking steps to take part in the discussions of the Scottish constitutional convention.

Mr. Rifkind: No.

Lead Plumbing

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans for replacing lead plumbing in pre-war houses and tenement blocks; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The replacement of lead plumbing within a house is the responsibility of the owner, though grants to private owners are available for this purpose from district and islands councils.

In the period 1982-87, over 45,000 grants which included lead plumbing works were approved by local authorities. In the same period more than 350,000 houses were improved by local authorities and other public sector agencies; many of these houses are likely to have had lead plumbing replaced as part of the modernisation works.

Water Supply

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to give any advice to regional water authorities concerning the addition of orthophosphate to the public water supply; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no plans to issue further advice at the present time. Full advice was given to regional and islands authorities in mid-1984. The addition of orthophosphate has achieved considerable reductions in levels of lead in tap water in a number of areas of Scotland. The effectiveness of the treatment is kept under review.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in view of the growth of Sunday trading in Scotland, he has any plans for a review of the law so as to provide safeguards for employees and local residents.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no such plans.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on people being denied jobs or being required to give up employment, if, on grounds of family or conscience, they do not wish to work on Sundays.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Other than those in the report "Scotland's Sunday Under Pressure", none.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has received the publication, "Scotland's Sunday Under Pressure" by the Keep Sunday Special Campaign; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has received the publication and has noted its findings.

Policewomen

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, in the light of research findings of Professor Ray Wilkie on policewomen in Scotland, he will consider whether any policy changes need to be effected.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We are examining the report, but the main implications of the research findings are for the police service itself to consider. I understand that copies of the report have been circulated to the chief constables of all Scottish police forces.

Contracts (Tendering)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to prohibit expenditure by certain local authorities on forming and operating separate companies for catering and cleaning services to compete with private contractors who may tender for local authority contracts; what assessment he has made of the effects of this practice on the ability of private contractors to compete fairly for these contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Within the resources available to them, local authorities may do anything that

is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions. If authorities decide to set up companies for catering and cleaning services, they cannot award contracts to such companies without taking reasonable steps to secure competition for the carrying out of the work. I should be glad to be informed of any evidence that private contractors are being prevented from competing fairly in such circumstances.

YTS

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is monitoring the impact of the YTS guarantee on 16 and 17-year-olds.

Mr. Lang: I am satisfied that the Training Agency in Scotland has more than sufficient YTS places available for those young people under 18 who want one.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number of summer school leavers eligible for YTS as a result of failing to obtain employment or a place in full-time education.

Mr. Lang: We estimate that up to 50,000 16 to 17-year-olds might leave school this summer. All are eligible for YTS, but only a proportion will seek a place. The Training Agency has consulted the careers service and is satisfied that it has sufficient places to meet likely demand, but further places can be provided if required.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give *(a)* the number of YTS places available and *(b)* occupied for each of the former administration areas of the Training Agency, known as area manpower boards.

Mr. Lang: This information is not available in the precise form requested. As at 31 May 1989 the Training Agency had 61,115 agreed YTS places in Scotland and 47,345 of these were filled. This information is broken down by Training Agency area office area as follows:

	Agreed places	*In training*
Glasgow city	9,844	8,434
Lanarkshire	6,306	5,325
Renfrew, Dunbarton and Argyll	8,249	6,260
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	6,969	5,498
Lothian and Borders	7,655	5,424
Central and Fife	9,287	6,831
Grampian and Tayside	9,397	7,220
Highlands and Islands	3,408	2,353

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the YTS guarantee will be met for every 16 and 17-year-old summer school leaver in Scotland who does not enter full-time education or permanent employment.

Mr. Lang: We aim to ensure that every young person under 18 who is seeking a YTS place is offered one before his or her entitlement to benefit ends.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the YTS guarantee is being met; and how monitoring of this procedure is being undertaken.

Mr. Lang: Yes the guarantee is being met. Local arrangements with the careers service ensure that Training Agency area offices are aware of and can satisfy demand for YTS places.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number of 16 and 17-year-olds in Scotland who did not obtain a YTS place before the expiry of the period of extended child benefit or bridging allowance between September 1988 and the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: The guarantee of a YTS place to all 16 and 17-year-olds that want one means that there is no need for any young person who applies for a YTS place in reasonble time to be without financial support. Information about young people who are not on benefit or on YTS is not collected centrally. I cannot therefore offer an estimate of their numbers.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has met the regional and islands council careers officers to discuss the implementation of the YTS guarantee.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My officials regularly meet representatives of Scottish careers services to discuss this and other matters.

Dounreay

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much time has elapsed since he received the report from his reporter, Mr. A. Bell, on the public inquiry into the application to build the European demonstration reprocessing plant at Dounreay.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The report on the public local inquiry was received by my right hon. and learned Friend on 30 March 1988. He is currently considering the implications of the report.

Planning Applications

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the planning applications, including outstanding applications, in respect of which public inquiries have been held since May 1979 and his decision has not been announced until a date more than *(a)* 12 months, *(b)* 18 months and *(c)* 24 months after the conclusion of the inquiry.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:-

1. Applications called-in by the Secretary of State in respect of which public inquiries have been held since May 1979 and where the decision was made more than

(a) 12 months after the conclusion of the inquiry;
Skiing development, Lurcher's Gully, Aviemore
Aberdeen Central Comprehensive Development (Area B)
Waste disposal plant, Inchbelly Farm, Kirkintilloch
Landfill site, Dalinlongart, Argyll
Travelling people's site, Hardhill Road, Bathgate
Travelling people's site, Panmurefield, Dundee
Lorry Park, Barnhill, Moffat
Housing development, Small Glebe, Newtyle, Angus

(b) 18 months after the conclusion of the inquiry;
Refuse tip, Brandon Howe, Banff

(c) 24 months after the conclusion of the inquiry;
European Demonstration Reprocessing Plant, Dounreay

2. Applications subject to appeal to the Secretary of State in respect of which public inquiries have been held since May 1979 and where the decision was made more than:

(a) 12 months after the conclusion of the inquiry;
Housing development, Garthdee Road, Aberdeen

Joiner's Workshop and store, Margaret Cottage, Grandhome, Aberdeen
Housing development, Royal Nurseries, Old Dalkeith Edinburgh
Housing development, Edmonstone Mains Farm, Edinburgh
Housing development, Maybury Road, Edinburgh
Housing development, The Drum, Gilmerton, Edinburgh
Housing development, Strathblane Road, Milngavie
Road proposal, Stepps By-pass, Glasgow
Opencast extraction of fireclay, Crossgates Plantation, Braidwood, Carluke
Reconstruction of station facilities, Williamwood Station, Giffnock
Housing development, Meikle Earnoch, Hamilton
Shopping development, Newhouse, Motherwell
Shopping development, former British Leyland site, Bathgate

(b) 18 months after the conclusion of the inquiry;
Boreholes in Carrick Forest, Loch Doon
Housing development, Dalhousie Mains, Bonnyrigg, Midlothian
Shopping, housing and high technology park development, Maybury Park, South Gyle, Edinburgh
Shopping development, The Craigs, Maybury Road, Edinburgh
Shopping development, Hermiston Gait, Cultins Road, Edinburgh

(c) 24 months after the conclusion of the inquiry;
None.

Glasgow School of Chiropody

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on the future of the clinical department of the Glasgow school of chiropody;

(2) if he will make it his policy to guarantee the future funding of the Glasgow school of chiropody for the next five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I announced on 24 February 1988 my approval for the transfer of Greater Glasgow health board's school of chiropody to Queen's college, Glasgow in the higher education sector. The school will continue to be funded by the health board until this transfer is effected and after transfer will be funded in exactly the same manner as other institutions in the higher education sector. The health board is currently considering whether some of the chiropody services provided in a clinic adjacent to the school might be redistributed to other sites in their area.

Rural Areas

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further steps he plans to take to ensure the effective co-ordination of the various Government policies and initiatives for the rural areas of Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: This Government have always recognised the importance of rural areas in Scotland. We have responded to their changing needs and have demonstrated our commitment to their well-being over the years through many and varied forms of assistance to help sustain rural communities, stimulate economic activity, and maintain and enhance the environment.

We are in a period of changing emphasis for rural Scotland. For instance, agriculture support policies are being reshaped; new development opportunities are being recognised, not least by local communities supported by the voluntary sector; and we are placing even greater emphasis on effective conservation of the environment. I am encouraged by the increasing awareness of a need to achieve a balance between development and conservation to sustain the resources of our natural environment for the benefit of future generations while at the same time permitting rural communities to achieve their full economic potential.

In order to ensure that our current and future efforts are fully co-ordinated and effectively targeted, I have asked my noble Friend the Minister of State, Lord Sanderson of Bowden, to take special responsibility for rural policy co-ordination in the Scottish Office in addition to his existing responsibilities for agriculture, fisheries, forestry, Highlands and Islands development and tourism. This appointment will ensure that the initiatives already in hand and further developments likely to occur in the coming years are properly co-ordinated and work together to achieve their common purpose of enhancing the position of rural areas.

Other Ministers will retain their existing responsibilities. Lord Sanderson will concentrate on ensuring that, in a time of change, the right balance is struck between the protection of the environment and economic development.

Roads

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to publish a White Paper on Scottish roads.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the major statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on 18 May in which he announced a substantial increase in funds for the trunk road programme. In that statement the Secretary of State indicated his trunk road priorities and referred to a planned consultation paper on the "routes south of Edinburgh" study, and a major review of the trunk and principal road network. The outcome of these consultations may form the basis of a policy document or White Paper in due course.

Tree Planting

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly, of 22 June, *Official Report*, columns *205-6*, whether the figures given relate to actual hectares of forestry planted within the period specified or the number of hectares for which grant was paid within that period.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* As stated in the answer, the figures given in categories *(b)*, *(c)* and *(d)* were the areas on which planting grant was paid, while the figures in categories *(a)* and *(e)* were, respectively, the areas actually planted and the areas estimated to have been planted, in the period specified.

Erskine Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the outstanding debt on the Erskine bridge as at 31 March.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* This figure will not become available until the bridge account for 1988-89 is finalised and laid before Parliament.

ENERGY

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out the basis of the statement made by the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) to the international business machines conference in Bournemouth on 13 June that each new pressurised water reactor nuclear station operated would reduce United Kingdom carbon dioxide emissions by 6 million tonnes a year against a coal-fired station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Each tonne of typical United Kingdom power station coal burnt produces approximately 2 tonnes of carbon dioxide. The figure of 6 million tonnes a year of carbon dioxide equates to a 1·2 GW station displacing equivalent baseload coal fired plant burning a little under 3 million tonnes a year.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what commitments he intends to enter into on behalf of the Government in respect of National Power's costs for the decommissioning of nuclear power stations and the disposing of and reprocessing of nuclear waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy made clear to the hon. Member on Report on 10 April at column 667, the industry, and, therefore, the consumer, will pay these costs unless something happens which is not foreseen—such as the regulations concerning the environment being changed—and proper provisions could not, therefore, have been made in the accounts. The amendments the Government intend to table at Lords Report stage, announced by Baroness Hooper on 19 June at column 20, do not represent a change to this policy, but a particular means of implementing the Government's commitments under it.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Use

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any further information in relation to water use restrictions following his answer to the hon. Member for Kingswood on 8 June, *Official Report*, column *87*.

Mr. Howard: We are now aware of 16 cases in England where water utilities, using their powers under section 16 of the Water Act 1945, have imposed bans on the use of hosepipes for watering gardens and washing cars. These affect about 6 per cent. of the population.

Equity Share Schemes

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities in the east midlands region have plans to build houses under equity share schemes.

Mr. Trippier: The Department does not collect information in the detail requested. Some indication of local authorities' intentions may be found in their annual housing investment programme submissions, copies of which are available in the Library.

Bathing Waters

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by which date he expects all identified bathing waters in the north-west region to meet the provisions of EEC directive 76/160/EEC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Department is currently discussing with water authorities, including North West water authority, plans that they have drawn up aimed at bringing remaining bathing waters up to EC standards by the mid-1990s.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list North West Water's environmental quality objectives for all identified bathing waters on the Fylde coast, Morecambe bay and north Cumbrian coast.

Mr. Howard: Quality objectives for rivers and estuaries are at present set by water authorities; in future this will be the responsibility of the Secretary of State on the advice of the National Rivers Authority. The relevant standards for identified bathing waters are set out in the EC directive 76/160/EEC, a copy of which is in the Library.

Surcharging

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the last two occasions on which councillors have been surcharged for refusing to grant planning permission.

Mr. Gummer: The surcharging of councillors under sections 19 and 20 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 is a matter for individual auditors. I am not aware of any case in which councillors have been surcharged for refusing to grant planning permission.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the last two occasions on which councillors have been surcharged.

Mr. Gummer: I understand that the last two occasions on which councillors were surcharged were in September 1985 when councillors from Lambeth and Liverpool were surcharged in connection with late rate-making.

CO_2 Emissions

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the carbon coefficient assumed for motor spirit and derv in producing carbon dioxide emissions; and what are the latest estimates of carbon dioxide emissions in the transport sector, broken down into road, rail and air transport.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* Estimates of carbon dioxide emissions from fuels are made by multiplying the fuel consumption figures by a factor which is the assumed carbon content of the fuel in question. These factors are subject to constant revision as more information becomes available from suppliers about the carbon content of their fuels. The factors used in calculating carbon dioxide emissions from petrol and derv are 855g/kg and 857g/kg of fuel used respectively.

The most recent estimates of carbon dioxide emissions from road, rail and air transport for 1987 are based on

information supplied by Warren Spring laboratory. Both the carbon content of fuel and fuel consumption figures are subject to revision. These are the current best estimates available. In 1987, 96·2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide were emitted by road transport. The figures for rail and air transport are 2·2 million tonnes and 18·4 million tonnes of carbon dioxide respectively. Emissions from aircraft using fuel supplied in the United Kingdom will not all occur in United Kingdom air space. The figure of 18·4 million tonnes is an estimate of emissions occurring world wide from aircraft fuel supplied originally in the United Kingdom. The figures given here differ slightly from those published in the Department's "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics 1988", because of updating.

Nature Reserves

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the further report allowing publication of the strategy for national nature reserves; and what plans he has for consultation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my noble Friend the Minister of State for Housing, Environment and Countryside in another place. Anyone wishing to send comments to the Nature Conservancy Council about the preliminary report is invited to do so. An announcement will be made in due course about the next stage of the review.

Water Meters

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent the monthly cost of water bills in the pilot scheme in the Isle of Wight involving water meters differed from previous costs before the introduction of water meters.

Mr. Howard: The tariff used in the meter trials on the Isle of Wight have been set so as to recover the same amount of income in total from the island as would have been recovered under a rateable value basis. It is, however, too early to say to what extent individual bills will differ as customers on the island will not receive their first metered bills until October.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there has been any formal evaluation of the pilot scheme for water meters in the Isle of Wight; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Some preliminary results from the Isle of Wight and other metering trials were set out in the first interim report which was published last February. Other reports will be published from time to time over the next three years as information on various aspects of the trials becomes available.

Housing Management

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to act on the recommendation in the Glasgow university report "The Nature and Effectiveness of Housing Management in England" to introduce a system of performance indicators for local authority housing management.

Mr. Trippier: My noble Friend the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside intends to table an amendment to the Local Government and Housing Bill during Committee stage in another place.

This would enable a performance indication scheme to be put in place in every local authority so that tenants will be able to see—for the first time—how efficient, effective and economical their authority is in managing its housing stock. Precise requirements will be for regulations. We plan to consult widely before introducing the scheme.

Water Purity

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what reports he has received concerning the presence in water supplies in south-west London of the organism chironomidae; what action is being taken to eliminate the organism; how long he expects elimination to take; and if he will make a statement on how the matter arose and what action he intends to take to prevent a recurrence;

(2) what advice or instructions his Department gives to water undertakings to monitor water supplies to test for the presence of unwanted organisms; whether he considers present practice to be adequate in the light of the existence of chironomidae in water supplies in south-west London; whether he considers Thames Water complied fully with the recommended procedures; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what advice or instructions his Department gives to water undertakings to check their filter beds and other elements in the processing cycle for water supplies against physical objects which might lead to the entry and multiplication of unwanted organisms in the water supply; whether such instructions or advice were complied with by Thames Water in the light of the presence of contaminated water supplies in south-west London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My Department has received a report from Thames Water that chironomid larvae are present in the water supply to parts of the boroughs of Hammersmith, Fulham, Hounslow, Kingston, Lambeth, Merton, Richmond, Southwark and Wandsworth supplied from the Hampton treatment works.

Thames Water found that two sand filters were passing larvae into the supply. These filters have been isolated for inspection and, if necessary, repair. Thames Water is also draining and cleaning the filtered water storage tank at the works. This cleaning operation is expected to take several days to complete. Thames Water is still investigating the cause of the incident.

My Department has not issued specific advice on the monitoring of water supplies or the checking of filter beds for the presence of unwanted organisms such as chironomidae. It is the water undertaker's responsibility to check that processes are operating efficiently and to monitor the quality of water entering supply. My Department's standing committee of analysts has published methods of biological sampling for macro-invertebrates which includes chironomidae. I understand that many water undertakers use these methods to monitor certain water supplies at times of the year when the presence of chironomidae is possible.

My Department will urgently review current practice with water undertakers when the cause of this incident is known.

Drinking Water Quality

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place a copy of the Government's response to the European Community's reasoned opinion on drinking water quality in the Library.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on 30 June, *Official Report*, Vol. 155, column *580*.

Land Development Managers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many water authorities have now an officially designated land development manager or a post carrying such specific responsibilities.

Mr. Howard: All the nine water authorities in England have property or estates managers whose responsibilities include the disposal of surplus land.

Hospitals (Radioactive Waste)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many hospitals currently store solid radioactive waste on site; and what controls exist for monitoring and ensuring safety.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Four hundred and eighty eight hospitals in England are authorised to store radioactive waste under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 and under the Radioactive Substances (Hospitals' Waste) Exemption Order 1963. Monitoring and safety are ensured by inspectors from both Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of hospitals licensed under the Radioactive Substances Act 1966 to discharge radioactive wastes into the atmosphere or into the sewers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Hospitals authorised to discharge radioactive wastes are given in the list of registrations in England and Wales issued under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 for the keeping and use of radioactive materials and mobile sources. A copy is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish figures for the amount of radioactive waste released into the atmosphere or down drains or stored on site at hospitals in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information about the quantities of radioactive waste discharged and stored at hospitals is not kept centrally; records are kept at individual premises.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what access local people and their representatives have to information about the level and potential dangers of the discharge of radioactive wastes from hospitals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Monitoring and safety are ensured by inspectors from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Health and Safety Executive who visit the premises. Details of any hazards found are published in the inspectorate of pollution's annual report which is available in the Library of the House.

Cyanide

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures his Department intends to take in order to protect the environment from the use of cyanide in prospective gold mining.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been asked to reply. Cyanide is not used in any gold mining operation in Scotland, nor are there any plans for its use in Scotland. The use of cyanide in mining would be subject to existing controls which apply, for example, to the use of substances hazardous to health and safety, to discharges to rivers or sewers and to the disposal of waste. I am not aware that any further controls are needed.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has commissioned research on the environmental effects of cyanide in prospective gold mining; and if he will publish the results.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been asked to reply. Cyanide is not used in any gold mining operation in Scotland, nor are there any plans for its use in Scotland. The dangers of cyanide to human health are well known and its use is thus strictly controlled. I am not aware of any need for research in this area.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of land within the Argyll and Bute district council area is designated as sites of special scientific interest or otherwise protected.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been asked to reply. The Nature Conservancy Council has advised me that 7 per cent. of land within Argyll and Bute district council area is designated SSSI or otherwise protected.

Community Charge

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *198*, how many copies of the community charge practice notes have been issued to people or organisations other than local authorities.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* In the case of the community charge practice note No. 19 "Exemptions from the Personal Community Charge (2)", published earlier this month, 2,700 copies were distributed to practitioners in local government and a further 700 copies were circulated to other organisations and individuals. Detailed records of distribution are not available for previous practice notes, but the proportion of local authority to other recipients was similar.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 11 May to the hon. Member for Copeland, *Official Report*, column *521*, he will state how many requests have been received from the public by the private company, contracted by the Central Office of Information, for the leaflets on the community charge listed on page 2 of "The Community

Charge (The So-Called Poll Tax): How It Will Work For You" delivered to all households in England: what is the average time taken to deal with a request for one or more leaflets; what monitoring of this company's performance is being undertaken by the Central Office of Information; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 28 June 1989]:* There has been exceptionally high demand for these further leaflets with over 235,000 requests received so far. Many requests are for more than one leaflet. It was thought right to delay distribution until the outcome of court action by Greenwich borough council against the short leaflet "The Community Charge (the so-called Poll Tax)" was known and the implications of the judgment could be fully assessed. This and the level of demand has led to delays, both factors beyond my control, which I naturally regret. Orders arising for the short leaflet are, however, now being met and an explanatory letter is being sent to people who have placed orders which cannot be fulfilled until stocks have been replenished. Reprinting to meet the high demand is under way. The usual monitoring procedures are in place. All orders will be fulfilled as quickly as possible.

Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure compliance by the Felixstowe Dock and Railway company with the terms of his consent issued under section 6 of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Act 1988, for the phase one reclamation by the company of lands at Fagbury.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* The Department's primary concern for limiting the consent under section 6(3) of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Act 1988 to phase one reclamation by the Felixstowe Dock and Railway company was to ensure that the environmental effects, in particular the damage and disturbance to the birds, were minimised.

Before issuing the consent, I had regard to the various agreements and undertakings entered into by or on behalf of the company during the passage of the Act in respect of the establishment of a nature reserve at Trimley marshes, landscaping and other matters. I also had regard to the agreement reached between the Nature Conservancy Council and the company subsequent to the passage of the Act for a programme of ornithological and hydrological monitoring studies within the Orwell estuary to identify changes in the bird population and their habitats resulting from phase one of the works.

It is up to the parties to the various agreements to monitor the situation and seek compliance with the terms of the agreement. It is understood from the Nature Conservancy Council that the ornithological monitoring studies are progressing satisfactorily.

Water Supplies

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the monitoring arrangements he has made in respect of derogations of water supplies granted by him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* Where a derogation has been granted by my Department to water undertakers under the terms of the EC drinking water directive my officials carry out periodic reviews. Where improvements are necessary, my officials check on progress made by water undertakers.

Sewage Discharges (North West)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the monitoring arrangements he has made in respect of any derogation of sewerage either in force or under consideration in the north west; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer, 30 June 1989]:* At present, consents to discharge effluent from sewage treatment works issued under part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 contain conditions which require that discharges are sampled by the water authority on the basis of agreed sampling guidelines. Under the Water Bill, it will become the responsibility of the National Rivers Authority to issue discharge consents and to determine appropriate sampling and monitoring arrangements.

Rating Reform

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what alternative method to the rating valuation list he proposes to use after the introduction of the poll tax in England and Wales in April 1990 to calculate home loss payments.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* There are no plans to introduce a poll tax but instead a charge for the services provided locally.

In paragraph 8 of the consultation paper on land compensation and compulsory purchase legislation which my Department issued on 7 March 1989, we have proposed provision for the Secretary of State to prescribe a single flat rate of home loss payable to all qualifying claimants at broadly the present level. However, the paper invited comments on whether, in the light of the general operation of the land compensation code, some further provision would be appropriate in the case of owner-occupiers who are displaced as a result of compulsory purchase. We are currently studying the responses of the consultation papers, a copy of which I am sending to the hon. Member.

Water Supply (Yorkshire)

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the water supply in Yorkshire meets the European Community guidelines for aluminium content, and for any other additives, metals or pesticides.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* Most supplies in the Yorkshire water authority area regularly comply with the standards set in the EC drinking water directive. Those supplies which regularly exceed the directive's standards, including those for aluminium, manganese and iron, and for which the Department has granted derogations under article 9 of the directive, are included in the list which I placed in the Library on 22 June. Derogations under article 9 can be granted only where the situation is due to the nature and structure of the ground and there is no risk to public health.

I also refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 8 March, *Official Report*, column *521-22.*

HMS Cambridge, Wembury

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive notification under circular 18/84 of proposal, for new boundary fencing at HMS Cambridge, Wembury; and when he is planning to hold a public inquiry.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 20 June 1989]:* My hon. Friend the then Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces undertook to follow the procedures for Crown development laid down in circular 18/84. But it is for his Department to decide how to proceed within the terms of that circular. If the proposal is referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State he will then decide whether the proposal should proceed by way of a non-statutory local inquiry, an informal hearing or the exchange of written representations.

River Pollution

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sewage treatment works within Northumbria water authority's boundaries and the number of times each sewage treatment works has failed the discharge consent standard in each of the last two years.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 21 June 1989]:* Details of the sewage treatment works in the Northumbrian water authority area are held on the public register, which is maintained by the authority and is available for public inspection, free of charge, at all reasonable hours. The register includes information about any breaches of discharge consents.

Water Companies (Deemed Consent)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes his Department will make to the procedure of granting deemed consent to companies following the privatisation of water authorities.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 26 June 1989]:* The arrangement for granting deemed consents to companies was a transitional provision under part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 related to those categories of discharge brought under control for the first time. This applied only to applications received by 14 October 1987. There are no plans to reintroduce the procedure for granting deemed consents following privatisation of the water industry.

Burnley Inner Area Programme

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to issue approval for Burnley inner area programme protect HS 205—Council for Voluntary Service single homeless project.

Mr. Trippier: Urban programme funding was approved for the project on 29 June.

Water Privatisation

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to the answer to the hon. Member for Dewsbury, 26 June, *Official Report*, column *299*, if he will specify the exact amount which was allowed for expenditure on the water authorities' current corporate awareness advertising compaigns when approving the water authorities' overall financing limits.

Mr. Howard: No. To do so would prejudice the authorities' media buying negotiations.

EMPLOYMENT

Industry Training Boards

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to publish his proposals on the future of the industry training boards.

Mr. Nicholls: I have asked the chairman of each ITB to bring forward proposals for future training arrangements in the industry by the end of July.

Restart

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed people have *(a)* been called for a restart interview, *(b)* attended a restart interview, *(c)* been referred to UBO for failing to attend interview, *(d)* been disallowed, *(e)* been called for restart follow-up interview, *(f)* attended a restart follow-up interview, *(g)* been referred to UBO for failing to attend follow-up interview and *(h)* been disallowed after referral to UBO for the Training Agency covering the Doncaster area, for each of the latest four three monthly periods available.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is given in the table. The figures relate to the employment service, Humberside south area.

	April-June 1988	*July-September 1988*	*October-December 1988*	*January-March 1989*
(a) Called for restart interview	10,923	10,337	12,308	13,072
(b) Attended restart interview	8,731	8,707	8,434	8,903
(c) Referred to UBO for failing to attend interview	669	775	663	687
(d) Disallowed for failing to attend	56	68	40	67
Restart follow-up interviews (figures also included in totals above)				
(e) Called for restart interview	134	235	1,177	1,298
(f) Attended restart interview	47	124	765	884
(g) Referred to UBO for failing to attend interview	2	5	63	114

	April-June 1988	July-September 1988	October-December 1988	January-March 1989
(h) Disallowed for failing to attend	*Not available in form requested—included in (d) above*			

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed people have been referred to the following outcomes as a result of their restart interviews and, for each of the outcomes, how many people started or attended *(a)* job, *(b)* restart course, *(c)* ET, *(d)* CP, *(e)* new JTS, *(f)* jobclub, *(g)* EAS, *(h)* voluntary work/VPP, *(i)* ERC, *(j)* DRO and *(k)* claimant adviser for the Training Agency covering the Doncaster area, for each of the latest four three monthly periods available.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is given in the table. The figures relate to the employment service, Humberside south area. We do not know how many people ultimately obtain a job or other opportunity as a result of the restart interview.

	April-June 88	July-September	October-December	January-March 89
(a) Job	467	666	476	520
(b) Restart Course	74	104	162	222
(c) ET (since 09.88)	0	915	2,741	2,591
(d) CP[1]	396	142	0	0
(e) New JTS[1]	1,723	1,611	0	0
(f) Jobclub	467	382	473	437
(g) EAS	191	218	239	223
(h) Voluntary Work/VPP[1]	108	52	0	0
(i) ERC	9	18	0	0
(j) DRO	288	292	272	270
(k) Claimant Adviser	742	831	633	452

[1] To September 1988.

Tourism (Yorkshire and Humberside)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the top 20 tourist attractions in numbers of tourists attending or visiting Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Lee: The English tourist board's annual survey of visits to attractions gives the following figures for the Yorkshire and Humberside regional tourist board area in 1988:

	Number of visits
York Minster	2,100,000
Flamingo Land	1,001,000
Jorvik Viking Centre	865,909
National Museum of Photography	824,811
Rother Valley Country Park	689,329
Castle Museum, York	640,705
National Railway Museum	565,574
Hornsea Pottery	500,000
Tropical World, Leeds	500,000
Lightwater Valley Theme Park	421,121
Bridlington Leisure World	350,748
Sheffield City Museum	321,106
Fountains Abbey	274,414
North Yorkshire Moors Railway	250,000
Leeds City Art Gallery	236,223
Bolton Abbey	233,130
York Dungeon	231,149
Thyrbergh Country Park, Doncaster	225,000
Bronte Parsonage, Haworth	212,545
Dalby Forest Drive	205,000

Jobcentres (Doncaster and Mexborough)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what checks are carried out by his Department's staff in the jobcentres at Doncaster and Mexborough, to establish whether vacancies advertised are offering rates of pay which fall below wages council rates.

Mr. Lee: Jobcentres have full details of wages council minimum rates of pay and instructions that, where vacancies are notified for occupations affected by wages council orders, rates must not be less than those specified.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether any vacancies advertised by his Department's jobcentres in Doncaster and Mexborough on 26 June were offering rates of pay which fall below wages council rates.

Mr. Lee: On 26 June, Doncaster jobcentre was displaying five vacancies and Mexborough jobcentre had three vacancies which were covered by wages council orders. I am informed that none of the vacancies concerned was advertising rates of pay below the minimum wages council rates.

Tourism (Cambridgeshire)

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total value of tourism in Cambridgeshire at current prices in each of the years from 1979 to 1989.

Mr. Lee: The available information for Cambridgeshire is shown in table 1 and relates to expenditure by overseas visitors to the United Kingdom who made a trip of at least one night to Cambridgeshire. Information about spending by domestic residents is available only for the whole of the East Anglia tourist board region, and is shown in table 2 together with the equivalent information for overseas visitors. Figures for tourist expenditure by United Kingdom residents on day trips to Cambridgeshire or East Anglia are not available.

Table 1
Estimated spending in Cambridgeshire by overseas residents[1,2]

	£ million
1979	31
1980	34
1981	34
1982	31
1983	58
1985	42
1986	69
1987	73
1988	81

Table 2
Estimated spending in East Anglia[3]

£ million

	By overseas residents[1]	By British residents[2]	Total
1979	111	295	406
1980	96	308	404
1981	95	339	434
1982	95	349	444
1983	126	391	517
1984	125	[4]346	471
1985	147	350	497
1986	157	445	602
1987	179	490	669
1988	189	555	744

[1] *Source:* International Passenger Survey.
[2] *Source:* British Tourist Authority.
[3] East Anglia Regional Tourist Board comprising: Cambridgeshire together with Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex.
[4] From 1984 an improved method of estimating expenditure was introduced for domestic spending. Figures for 1984 and later years are, therefore, not strictly comparable with those for earlier years.

Employment Rehabilitation Centres

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to the reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on 14 June, *Official Report*, column *436*, he will publish in the *Official Report* any changes to policy or guidelines which have caused a 50 per cent. reduction in the average length of attendance at employment rehabilitation centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The average length of stay of all clients in ERCs has reduced because many more people are finding short courses of assessment and guidance are meeting their needs. However, in 1989 the length of stay on rehabilitation courses was 35 days and has remained consistent over the last five years. I am also pleased to report that the number of people helped by the ERS has increased from 12,000 in 1984-85 to about 26,000 in 1988-89.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the employment rehabilitation centres which share sites with skillcentres, when the Skills Training Agency is moved into the private sector.

Mr. Lee: The employment rehabilitation service, which includes employment rehabilitation centres, will continue. Contingency plans are being drawn up for individual centres on shared sites which may be affected in varying degrees by the move of the Skills Training Agency into the private sector.

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many letters and representations he has received concerning the future of the construction industry training board and its statutory levy since the publication of his paper "Employment for the 1990s".

Mr. Nicholls: A total of 253 letters and representations have been received by my Department.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give *(a)* the number of YTS places available and *(b)* the number of young people in training in each region, Scotland and Wales for each month from October 1988 to May 1989, inclusive.

Mr. Cope: The information is shown in the table.

Number of agreed YTS places and number of young people in YTS training in each region of England, Wales and Scotland for each month during period October to March 1989 (in thousands)

	October 1988		November 1988		December 1988		January 1989		February 1989		March 1989		April 1989		May 1989	
	Agreed places	In training	Agreed places	In training	Agreed places	In training	Agreed places	In training	Agreed places	In training	Agreed places	In training	Agreed places	In training	Agreed places	In training
South East	62·1	46·2	61·7	45·6	61·7	44·0	60·1	42·0	60·3	40·8	58·9	40·0	57·9	39·6	57·1	38·8
London	33·3	23·2	33·1	22·9	31·6	22·5	31·3	22·1	31·2	21·4	30·3	21·2	29·9	20·8	29·4	20·7
South West	46·1	34·6	45·9	33·6	45·9	33·0	45·9	32·0	43·7	31·3	43·4	30·5	41·8	30·0	40·7	29·2
West Midlands	71·3	50·4	72·5	49·1	72·0	48·3	70·8	47·2	71·3	44·5	69·1	43·6	67·5	43·2	66·5	42·2
East Midlands and Eastern	66·1	52·0	66·2	51·1	65·2	50·1	65·2	49·3	65·2	47·8	63·5	46·6	62·1	46·0	61·6	44·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	60·8	51·3	60·9	50·1	61·0	49·1	61·5	48·3	61·8	46·7	61·4	45·2	60·8	45·1	60·2	43·7
North West	82·4	67·9	82·8	67·1	83·0	65·9	82·1	64·6	81·8	63·0	80·5	60·7	77·8	59·2	76·2	58·4
Northern	40·4	33·2	40·5	33·0	40·4	32·6	40·4	31·8	40·4	21·0	39·6	30·5	38·5	30·0	38·1	29·2
Wales	29·8	26·2	29·9	25·6	29·8	25·5	29·8	24·8	29·4	24·2	29·0	23·8	28·2	23·9	28·1	23·6
Scotland	63·4	50·2	63·5	49·8	63·5	48·9	63·2	51·2	62·9	50·8	62·0	49·8	61·5	48·5	61·1	47·3
Totals	555·7	435·2	557·0	427·9	554·1	419·9	550·3	413·3	548·0	401·5	537·7	391·9	526·0	386·3	519·0	377·8

Training Agency

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are employed in his Department's Training Agency; and if he will give a breakdown of their main responsibilities.

Mr. Lee: On 1 June 1989, the latest date for which figures are available, the numbers of permanent staff employed in the Department's Training Agency were 11,893. Of these, 9,501 (including 2,623 Skills Training Agency staff) were employed in field offices on delivery and administration of the various programmes for which the Department is responsible. The remaining 2,392 were employed in head office; of these, 984·5 were employed in central services, 1,266·5 in policy and programmes division and the training standards advisory service and 141 in the Skills Training Agency head office.

Employment Training

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many referrals there have been on a monthly basis from the employment service to employment training agents *(a)* nationally, and *(b)* by training area since September 1988.

Mr. Cope: Information on the level of employment service (ES) referrals to training agents on a national basis is given in table 1. Information on levels of referrals on a Training Agency area office basis is not available.

Referrals to employment training training agents

Month	*Total referrals*
6 September 1988	96,525
October 1988	82,866
November 1988	80,407
December 1988[1]	68,306
January 1989	91,606
February 1989	89,863
March 1989[1]	95,765
April 1989	82,323
May 1989	74,284

[1] Five week month.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training managers, by training agency area, were receiving either (i) the standard, (ii) special, (iii) high level, (iv) extended introduction or further assessment supplementary grants for trainees on a monthly basis since September 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: This information is not available without disproportionate cost. Supplementary grants are a matter of negotiation between the Training Agency area office and the individual training manager.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement as to the progress of trainees from their initial referral to the ET training agent and a placement with a training manager.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest evidence we have on the referral of trainees into employment training shows that 51 per cent. of initial referrals attend the training agent and 79 per cent. of these are placed with a training manager.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library a list of local authorities that have refused to co-operate with employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) on 20 June 1989 at column *137*.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total budget spent on advertising employment training; and if he will provide a breakdown as to the nature of this spending.

Mr. Nicholls: The total spent on advertising employment training in the last financial year, 1988-89 was £9,654,954 and this financial year 1989-90 for the current campaign £4,375,750. This is broken down as follows:

	£
Television	11,366,822
Press	1,423,132
Posters	1,240,750

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when his Department will have completed the examination of ET training managers for approved status; and how many staff within the Training Agency are working on this exercise.

Mr. Nicholls: It is planned to complete the examination of employment training managers by 5 September 1990. The number of Training Agency staff dedicated to this purpose varies from area office to area office depending on local demand.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give *(a)* the number of employment training places available in 1989-90, *(b)* the number of people in ET on the latest date for which information is available and *(c)* an estimate of the planned ET places in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Nicholls: In May 1989 there were 255,000 available places on employment training. On 23 June, the latest date for which information is available, there were 192,000 people on the programme. Operational plans for 1990-91 and 1991-92 are not yet available.

Sullom Voe (Explosion)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the explosion at the Sullom Voe oil terminal on Thursday 22 June.

Mr. Nicholls: On 22 June 1989, the Health and Safety Executive was informed that due to the failure of a length of weld on a steel pipe drain at the Sullom Voe oil terminal, oily water was released causing an eruption of water and gravel. There were no injuries.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give *(a)* the total numbers of long-term unemployed and *(b)* the long-term unemployed as a percentage of the total unemployed in June of each year from 1979 to 1989, inclusive.

Mr. Lee: Unemployment is analysed by duration quarterly. Direct comparisons of unemployment by duration since 1979 are not possible because of the changes from a count of registrants at jobcentres to a count based on unemployed claimants in 1983 and other changes in coverage of the count. Following is the available information, which is also in the Library. The table shows the number of unemployed in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed over 12 months and these as a percentage of the total for each April from 1979 to 1989.

Long-term Unemployment in the United Kingdom[1]
April 1979-1989

April	*Unemployed over 12 months*	*Percentage of total*
1979	366,711	27·4
1980	354,101	23·3
1981	515,913	20·4
1982	994,395	33·1
1983	1,143,436	36·1
1984	1,218,162	39·2
1985	1,334,181	40·8
1986	1,356,521	40·8
1987	1,295,146	41·7

April	Unemployed over 12 months	Percentage of total
1988	1,029,206	40·6
1989	744,120	39·5

[1] Figures for 1979-82 are for unemployed registrants at Jobcentres; those for 1983-89 relate to claimants unemployed.

Minimum Trainee Allowance

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to his reply to hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, of Monday 19 June, *Official Report*, columns *10-11*, he will list those employers known to his Department who supplement the minimum trainee allowance; what percentage of YTS trainees are so covered; what is the average supplement paid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: There is no list of employers who supplement the minimum trainee allowance. Twenty-four per cent. of trainees had employed status in May 1989, and were paid a wage by their employer. Survey evidence suggests that in addition about 14 per cent. of non-employed trainees receive an average supplement of £7 a week from their work experience provider on top of their trainee allowance. Payments above the minimum level are at the discretion of the employer, and reflect the value to the company of acquiring skilled workers.

European Tourism Year

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures are being taken to help handicapped, disabled and disadvantaged tourists coming to Britain in European Tourism Year 1990.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* Specific initiatives to mark European Tourism Year are in the planning stage. Measures to help handicapped, disabled and disadvantaged tourists are being considered by the British tourist authority which is responsible for planning and co-ordinating the United Kingdom campaign.

Remploy

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make available the surveyor's report on Remploy's Rutherglen factory which resulted in the recommendation to close it down.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* The board of Remploy is responsible for making decisions relating to the day-to-day business of the company. The information requested is commercial and confidential to the board.

Health and Safety

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the level of fines imposed on each of the largest 100 companies for health and safety offences in the last five years; what was the nature of the accident and the date in each case; and how many persons were killed or seriously injured or suffered minor injuries on each occasion.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* The information requested could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each year since 1974 *(a)* the number of prosecutions of (i) managers, (ii) supervisors and (iii) company directors and *(b)* the fines under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* Available data do not differentiate between offences committed by managers, supervisors and company directors. The tables list the convictions obtained under section 36 and section 37 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Section 36 provides for the prosecution of a person whose act, or inaction, has led another individual to commit an offence under the Act. Section 37 provides for the prosecution of a director, manager, secretary or similar officer of a body corporate for offence committed by that body corporate. Information is not available for years before 1981.

Prosecutions under section 36 since 1981

Year[1]	Convictions[3]	Average penalty per conviction (£)
1981	—	—
1982	6	158
1983	7	275
1984	7	300
1985	9	500
1986[2]	3	417
1986-87	9	156
1987-88	9	261

Prosecutions under section 37 since 1981

Year[1]	Convictions[3]	Average penalty per conviction (£)
1981	7	179
1982	11	293
1983	6	221
1984	6	208
1985	11	218
1986[2]	1	300
1986-87	5	400
1987-88	4	188

[1] 1981 to 1985—calendar year.
1986-87 onwards—year commencing 1 April.
[2] January to March.
[3] Data covers convictions obtained by the Factory and Agriculture Inspectorates (the vast majority of cases).

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, for each year since 1974, the number of prosecutions of employees, and the outcome, under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 29 June 1989]*: The table lists for each year since 1981, the number of convictions and average fines under section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, which imposes a duty on every employee while at work to take reasonable care for the health and safety of himself and of other persons who may be affected by his acts or omissions. Information is not available for years before 1981.

Convictions under section 7 of the HSW Act

[1]Year	[2]Convictions	Average penalty for conviction (£)
1981	19	81
1982	21	112
1983	29	104
1984	23	118
1985	30	209
Jan-March 1986	7	64
1986-87	21	132
1987-88	27	183

[1] 1981-85—calendar years.
1986-87 onwards—year commencing 1 April.
[2] Data covers convictions obtained by the Factory and Agriculture Inspectorates (the vast majority of cases).

Factory Inspectors

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, for each year since 1974, the number and proportion of female factory inspectors of the total employed.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* Since 1 April 1976 the number of female factory inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive, the total number of factory inspectors employed, and the number of female inspectors expressed as a percentage of the total are as follows. Figures for earlier years are not available.

	Female inspectors	Total inspectors	Females as percentage of total
1 April			
1976	61·5	624·0	9·86
1977	65·0	676·5	9·61
1978	75·0	695·5	10·78
1979	95·0	742·0	12·80
1980	105·0	759·0	13·83
1981	98·5	735·0	13·40
1982	81·5	678·0	12·02
1983	74·5	654·0	11·39
1984	71·0	627·0	11·32
1985	76·0	652·0	11·66
1986	74·0	623·0	11·88
1987	87·0	621·5	14·00
1988	84·5	592·5	14·26
1989	92·0	604·0	15·23
1 June			
1989	96·0	621·5	15·44

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 4 July 1989

PRIME MINISTER

Inner Cities

Q30. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received about the Government's inner cities policy.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations, many of them in support of the Government's inner cities policies. Under the comprehensive range of measures, costing £3·5 billion this year which makes up the action for cities initiative, good progress continues to be made in the regeneration of our inner cities. In the 57 inner city target areas, unemployment fell by almost 24 per cent. in the 12 months to May 1989. Recorded crime in the Metropolitan police force areas fell by 6 per cent. in 1988. Involvement of private companies continues to grow—over the last six months the number of companies working with the Government's inner city task forces has increased from 450 to 500.

USSR

Q51. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the United Kingdom's relations with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The Prime Minister: We receive many representations about relations with the Soviet Union from individual members of the public, as well as from interested organisations and their representatives. The Government's desire to strengthen these relations, and our support for Mr. Gorbachev's reforms are widely shared.

United States of America

Q52. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the United Kingdom's relations with the United States of America.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations concerning relations with the United States of America.

The Prime Minister: No.

Road Safety

Q67. **Sir Anthony Grant:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding safety on the roads.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of such representations. There is understandable and widespread concern about the needless suffering and unnecessary economic cost caused by road accidents. Cutting the toll of road casualties is a high priority. Our target, which we set in 1987, is a one third reduction in casualties by the year 2000. We are well on course for achieving that.

Coal Industry

Q70. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the coal industry.

The Prime Minister: I have received several recent representations regarding the coal industry.

Scotland

Q71. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to Scotland.

The Prime Minister: Probably in September.

Pollution

Q79. **Sir Hugh Rossi:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the reduction of pollution.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations regarding the environment. I share the concern that it should be protected and pollution reduced. The Government have undertaken many measures to improve the quality of the environment. We intend to bring forward further legislative proposals on pollution control shortly.

Crawley

Q80. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Crawley.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Army

Q83. **Mr. John Browne:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the Army.

The Prime Minister: I regularly receive representations on a variety of subjects regarding the Army.

Industry (Revival)

Q86. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the revival of British industries.

The Prime Minister: A large number of the representations I receive acknowledge the remarkable revival enjoyed by British industry under this Government.

Pharmaceutical Industry

Q87. **Mr. Goodlad:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the pharmaceutical industry.

The Prime Minister: I have not recently received any particular representations regarding the pharmaceutical industry. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health has regular contact with the representatives of the industry.

Water Privatisation

Q95. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received on water privatisation.

Q139. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received any recent representations about water privatisation.

The Prime Minister: Many individuals and organisations have commented on a wide range of water privatisation matters, which are being considered in the context of the Water Bill currently before Parliament.

Disabled People (Legislation)

Q102. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Prime Minister what consultations she has had with Sir Roy Griffiths on the relevance of section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Representation and Consultation) Act 1986 as a strategy for community care.

The Prime Minister: Sir Roy Griffiths has been involved in the Government's consideration of his report "Community Care Agenda for Action". The Government's considerations are wide ranging and are taking account of existing relevant legislation.

European Council (Madrid)

Q106. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will publish a White Paper outlining the conclusions and the matters considered at the Madrid meeting of the European Council; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made on 29 June on the outcome of the European Council in Madrid.

Poland

Q165. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister if during the recent visit of General Jaruzelski she made representations to him on the case for totally free elections in Poland within the next 12 months; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. I told him that I welcomed the recent elections in Poland, as well as the confirmation that the Polish authorities stood by the election results and would continue on the path of democracy and reform.

Cyprus

Q168. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the United Kingdom's relations with Cyprus.

The Prime Minister: I receive representations on the United Kingdom's relations with Cyprus from time to time from various quarters. I am happy to say that relations are excellent. I have met President Vassiliou three times in the last year and I hope to see him again on 10 July.

West Germany

Q206. **Mr. Malins:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the United Kingdom's relationship with West Germany.

The Prime Minister: No.

France

Q216. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the United Kingdom's relations with France.

The Prime Minister: No.

Agricultural Policy

Q218. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding agricultural policy.

The Prime Minister: The Government frequently receive representations about agricultural policy. The United Kingdom agricultural industry is widely respected for its efficiency and competitiveness. It is well placed to benefit from the opportunities for fair competition which completion of the EC's single internal market will bring. And I was pleased yesterday at the royal show to pay tribute to the enormous contribution the agriculture industry and the thousands of individual farmers make to our national life.

Greenhouse Effect

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), *Official Report*, 2 May, column *114*, if she will now list by name the participants present at the seminar on environmental policies and the greenhouse effect which she organised on 26 April.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 2 May at column *114*.

Bristol Channel (Sewage)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Prime Minister when she will restrict or refuse local authorities the opportunity of new raw sewage outfalls into the Bristol channel.

The Prime Minister: The Secretary of State will consider on their merits any proposals which come before him related to the discharge of sewage into the Bristol channel. Discharge consents for long sea outfall schemes are granted only when they enable bathing waters in the vicinity to meet the requirements of the EC directive standards and where they are designed to take full account of local conditions.

Bathing Water (Pollution)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to take personal control of the co-ordination work to stop the dumping of raw sewage into the English Channel and to work towards these beaches attaining the standards of the EC bathing water directive 76/160/EEC.

The Prime Minister: The discharge of raw sewage through short sea outfalls is an unsatisfactory legacy from the past; and a substantial programme of improving the sewerage systems of coastal towns is under way. Replacement systems of whatever type are designed to bring identified bathing waters up to the standards set in the EC bathing water directive 76/160/EEC. Long sea outfalls, which discharge some 2 km to sea, are a safe and effective means for the disposal of screened sewage. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution grants discharge consents for long sea outfall schemes only when they enable bathing waters in the vicinity to meet the requirements of the EC directive standards and where they are designed to take full account of local conditions. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will continue to seek environmentally sound solutions for each location on the basis of the best available scientific evidence.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 July.

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 July.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 July.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

ENERGY

Electricity

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is the total consumption of electricity in *(a)* England, and *(b)* Wales in a full year recorded over the last five years for which figures are available, and the percentage consumption for domestic, industrial, and commercial sectors;

(2) what was the average demand for electricity measured in megawatts in England and Wales, shown separately, for the winter period and summer period for each of the last five years for which figures are available;

(3) what was the maximum demand for electricity measured in megawatts in England and Wales, separately, during 1988-89; and at what time of which day it occurred in each case.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These are matters for the Electricity Council. I shall ask the chairman of the council to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the total generating capacity of electricity in Wales measured in megawatts; and what is the percentage component in the total generated by *(a)* nuclear, *(b)* coal, *(c)* oil, *(d)* hydro, *(e)* pumped storage and *(f)* other.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I shall ask the chairman of the CEGB to write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Power Stations (Emergency Planning Zones)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will make a statement on the nuclear installations inspectorate's plans for reducing emergency planning zones around nuclear power stations;

(2) what changes are proposed to the size of emergency planning zones around nuclear power stations;

(3) what is the size of emergency planning zones around nuclear power stations;

(4) what is the stipulated evacuation area around British nuclear power stations in the event of a radiation emission.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 20 June 1989 at column *93*.

WALES

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been reported to him by the Welsh Language board; and what steps he is taking to implement any of its recommendations.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Language board published its strategy document on 22 June and will in the near future be publishing voluntary guidelines governing the use of Welsh in the public and private sectors. My right hon. Friend will give very careful consideration to all the board's recommendations.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what review he has undertaken of the availability of staff to provide medical and post-medical services in Welsh-speaking areas through the medium of the Welsh language; and whether he has any proposals to extend training courses in Wales to meet these requirements.

Mr. Grist: Information on the number of staff employed in the National Health Service in Wales who are bilingual in English and Welsh is not available centrally; the exception to this is information relating to speech therapists concerning which I wrote to the hon. Gentleman on 24 October 1988, placing a copy of my letter in the Library of the House. District health authorities in Wales are currently engaged in the second round of an annual manpower resource planning exercise to determine future manpower requirements in the National Health Service in Wales. Discussions of these plans with individual health authorities will include the demand for and availability of Welsh-speaking staff. Consideration will be given to the question of extending training courses in Wales to meet any such demand in the light of the outcome of that exercise.

Health Studies Centre

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the establishment of a health studies centre in North Wales; what consideration has been given to this issue; and what conclusions have been reached.

Mr. Grist: The Department has been asked by Clwyd health authority to provide financial support for the establishment of a centre for health studies in north Wales, fuller details of which have just been received. Consideration is being given to that request within the context of a recent report on the role of the combined training institute in Cardiff, which has examined the issue of training provision generally from the National Health Service in Wales. Representations in support of the proposal have been received from the Plaid Cymru spokesman on health and from the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas).

Urban Investment Grant

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library details of the criteria which applicants must meet to qualify for the urban investment grant.

Mr. Peter Walker: Urban investment grants (UIGs) are designed to support projects costing more than £150,000,

which are brought forward by private sector developers and which, because likely costs would exceed likely values on completion, would not otherwise proceed. To qualify for UIGs, which are site specific, developments must be located in an urban area in Wales and bring back into use derelict or rundown land and—or buildings. Projects must also produce benefits which contribute to alleviating urban deprivation. Copies of the UIG guidance notes, which set out these criteria, have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report*, on a county basis, the value of the urban investment grant for each month since its inception.

Mr. Peter Walker: Since the introduction of urban investment grants (UIG) on 1 April 1989, five schemes have been approved for support involving £2·033 million grant. The geographical distribution is as follows:

	Scheme	*£ million grant*
Gwynedd	1	0·066
Mid Glamorgan	4	1·967

In addition, eight applications are currently being considered, but all applications for UIG are treated in confidence.

River Pollution

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to increase funding for research into pollution of the river ecosystem with particular reference to the rivers of Wales before privatisation of the water industry.

Mr. Grist: This will be a matter for the National Rivers Authority.

Hospital Facilities

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, pursuant to his reply dated 20 June, *Official Report*, column *84*, he will list the range of facilities available in each of the hospitals mentioned in the reply.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Health district and community hospital	*Facilities available*
Clwyd	
Chirk	GP Medical, GP Post-natal, Outpatient, Casualty, Rehabilitation, X-ray, Day hospital
Colwyn Bay	GP Medical, Outpatient, Casualty, Rehabilitation, X-ray
Denbigh	GP Medical, Outpatient, Casualty, Rehabilitation, Day hospital
Mold	GP Medical, Outpatient, Casualty, Rehabilitation, X-ray, Day hospital
Prestatyn	GP Medical, Rehabilitation
Royal Alexandra, Rhyl	GP Medical, Geriatric, Outpatient, Rehabilitation, X-ray, Day hospital
Ruthin	GP Medical, Outpatient, Casualty, Rehabilitation, X-ray, Day hospital
Gwynedd	
Bryn Beryl, Pwllheli	GP Medical, Geriatric, Maternity, Casualty, Physiotherapy, Day hospital
Dolgellau	GP Medical, Geriatric, Maternity, Outpatient, Casualty, X-ray, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Day hospital
Tywyn	GP Medical, Geriatric, Maternity, Outpatient, Casualty, Operating, X-ray, Physiotherapy, Day hospital, Ambulance station

Meat Inspections

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact of European Community directives and regulations on the inspection in Wales of meat and meat products in the run-up to the single European market and on the likely changes in terms of staffing and finance that will be required to meet these requirements.

Mr. Peter Walker: The arrangements for meat inspection in the single market will depend upon decisions still to be taken by the Council of Ministers and it is not yet possible, therefore, to estimate the effects on staffing and costs. It is clear, however, that we shall need to move towards a unified supervision system in all our meat plants and we shall be discussing with the interests concerned how this should be achieved.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact of the veterinary presence in export slaughterhouses in Wales on the protection of public health.

Mr. Peter Walker: Veterinary supervision is required if slaughterhouses are to engage in intra-Community trade or export to third countries. If this requirement were not met our industry would not be able to export meat and meat products. I have never accepted, however, that veterinary supervision is essential to guarantee satisfactory standards of hygiene.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has made regarding EC document 8062/88; and whether he has urged the EC to recognise the role of district councils in Wales in the inspection of slaughterhouses and food hygiene duties.

Mr. Peter Walker: My officials have made it clear in discussions on this proposal that it is premature to consider arrangements for veterinary checks in advance of agreement on more fundamental aspects of the animal health arrangements to apply within the single market. I am not aware of any proposals that would seek to change the existing role of district councils in slaughterhouse inspections or food law enforcement.

Food Controls

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy that controls over food for human consumption in Wales should continue to come under the care of environmental health officers; and whether he will press the EC to recognise this approach.

Mr. Grist: The importance of the role that environmental health officers have in the area of food inspection and control is recognised by the Government. Our EC partners have been regularly pressed to indicate their recognition that environmental health officers will continue to have a role to play in the food hygiene field and discussions on this point are continuing.

Sewage Treatment Works (Rhymney Valley)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish details of those sewage treatment works in the Rhymney valley which require capital investment to bring the quality of discharges up to that stipulated in their discharge consents.

Mr. Grist: The sewage treatment works at Draethen and Rudry are included in the programme of capital investment.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Balance of Payments

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of British investment overseas; what was the level in 1979; and what impact it has on the balance of payments.

Mr. Major: In the year to 1989, United Kingdom direct investment and portfolio investment in overseas assets were £19·8 billion and £12·9 billion, respectively. Comparable figures for 1979 were £5·9 billion and £0·9 billion. Further details of the figures are available in the United Kingdom balance of payments press release of 15 June 1989.

The effect of these outflows on the make-up of the balance of payments cannot be measured precisely as, without them, inflows into the United Kingdom of interest, profits and dividends would be lower and, more generally, sterling's exchange rate would be different.

Economic Growth

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for economic growth in 1989-90.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor forecast at Budget time that real gross domestic product would grow by 2¼ per cent. in 1989-90.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of *(a)* all premium bond purchases and *(b)* purchases under £100 are made by pensioners.

Mr. Lilley: It is estimated that about 21 per cent. of all purchases and about 19 per cent. of purchases under £100 are made by people of pensionable age.

Investment

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the total investment growth figures for each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The figures for total investment growth in the United Kingdom at 1985 prices, over the last 10 years, are shown in the table.

United Kingdom total Gross Domestic Fixed Capital Formation (1985 prices) per cent. change on a year earlier

	Per cent. change
1978	3·01
1979	2·80
1980	−5·37
1981	−9·58
1982	5·42
1983	5·03
1984	8·60
1985	3·80
1986	1·66
1987	7·98
1988	12·25

Source: CSO.

Between 1980 and 1988 the United Kingdom had the fastest growth of total investment of all the EC countries.

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of investment in United Kingdom industry over the past 10 years can be accounted for by internally generated funds.

Mr. Major: Companies' undistributed income is used to finance a variety of expenditure, including investment, but it is not possible to say to what extent investment has been financed by internally or externally generated funds.

Village Halls (VAT)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has yet received clarification from the European Commission of the effect on village halls of the European Court of Justice's judgment on value added tax zero rates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I have now received a letter from Mrs. Christiane Scrivener, the EC Commissioner, which indicates that the Commission believes the European Court's judgment, while prohibiting the zero-rating of supplies of fuel and power to village halls, does not rule out zero-rating for the construction of village halls. I therefore propose to bring forward amendments to the Finance Bill at Report stage to reinstate the zero rate for the construction of new village halls and similar charitable buildings. These will be tabled as soon as possible.

Non-domestic Rates

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will announce his decision on possible abatement of the increase in national non-domestic rates by powers given under sub-paragraph 5(3) of schedule 7 to the Local Government Finance Act 1988; what criteria he will take into account when taking that decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 21 June 1989]:* The initial NNDR multipliers will be specified in the revenue support

grant reports for 1990-91. For succeeding years, the presumption is that the NNDR multiplier will be increased in line with the indexation provisions in the Local Government Finance Act 1988. However, if I did decide to increase the multipliers by less than the RPI, this would be announced before the revenue support grant reports for the year in question had to be approved by Parliament. All relevant considerations would be taken into account: for example, if improved efficiency led to a significant reduction in the amount local authorities needed to spend, some of the efficiency gains should be reflected in the burden which falls on the business community through non-domestic rates.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in the negotiations on the harmonisation of value added tax and excise duties.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* At its meeting on 19 June the Economic and Finance Council (Ecofin) agreed to set up an ad hoc group to examine the Commission's revised proposals, described in my answer to my hon. Friend on 23 May 1989 at column *440*, and the alternative approaches put forward by a number of member states including the United Kingdom. The group is due to report back to Ecofin in time for its meeting on 9 October.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many registered value added tax payers keep detailed records as described in paragraph 3 (D) of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, excise notice 700, appendix C, in order to avoid payment of scale charges for input value added tax on road fuel.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* I regret that the information requested is not available.

TRANSPORT

Signposting

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for improving signposting in London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am currently consulting the public and interested parties on proposals for a new system of primary route signing for the area within the M25. The proposed system uses compass-based areas to create a consistent and logical set of signs which would be easier for motorists to follow. Copies of the consultation document "Primary Route Signing-Proposals for Change" have been placed in the Library.

Thamesline

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newham, South of 4 April, *Official Report*, column *20*, what sums *(a)* have been paid and *(b)* will be paid in the current financial year to Thamesline; what proportion of income such payments are expected to provide; what conditions he has placed on any such payments in respect of maintenance of the service to all piers for which services were advertised; and if he will make a statement concerning the withdrawal of any such service.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I have given today to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). Riverbus Limited expects to be seeking the whole of the Government grant of £500,000 during the current financial year. The income forecasts of the business are commercially confidential.

Submarine Incident

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has concerning an incident involving the fishing vessel Huntress and a Royal Naval submarine Ocelot on 28 June; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: On the afternoon of 28 June off the Isle of Arran a submarine towed the fishing vessel Huntress astern after fouling her nets. No serious damage occurred and there were no reports of injuries. One of the Department's marine surveyors is investigating the incident.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received regarding transport links to the Channel tunnel from the north-west.

Mr. Portillo: There have been some representations, mainly about improvements to road and rail networks between the north west and other regions and the tunnel. Our national roads planning takes account of requirements of road traffic to and from the tunnel. British Rail is responsible for rail links to the Tunnel, and following the recent completion of its regional consultations, we are now awaiting the plan which the railways board has to produce by the end of this year under section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act setting out its proposals for international services to the regions.

Air Ventilation (Passenger Aircraft)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information his Department has regarding the reduction of air ventilation on passenger aircraft;

(2) what research his Department has conducted into the effects arising from reduction of air ventilation on passenger aircraft.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: These are technical matters pertinent to the certification standards of British-registered passenger aircraft. As such they are the statutory responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. I have drawn the hon. Member's interest in this subject to the attention of the chairman of the authority.

Aircraft Evacuation

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what are the grounds on which minimum safety standards for emergency evacuation of aircraft are established;

(2) what consideration is given in setting minimum standards for emergency evacuation of aircraft to the particular needs of travellers with mobility difficulties.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of United Kingdom civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority. I am asking the chairman of the authority to write to my hon. Friend.

Diesel Pollution

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to reduce pollution from vehicles using diesel fuel; and what regulations will be introduced with the introduction of the 40-tonne lorries.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We shall be consulting shortly on regulations which will apply emission limits on exhaust fumes from diesel-engined vehicles for the first time.

For cars, the regulations will apply European standards in two stages. The first stage (directive 83/351/EEC) sets standards identical to those that currently apply to petrol-engined vehicles. It will take effect on 1 October 1990. Our current plans are to apply a second stage of more stringent limits (directive 88/76/EEC) by 1 October 1993 to cars with an engine capacity of at least 1·4 litres, whether petrol or diesel.

A further stage of exhaust fume emission limits for small cars has now been agreed within the European Community. It will affect all new cars under 1·4 litres from 1992. The agreement also gives an outline commitment to tougher standards for larger cars to be implemented at the same time.

On 1 October 1990 we shall also apply the European particulate limits for diesel-engined cars (directive 88/436/EEC). Special arrangements in line with all the directives will be made for direct-injection diesel-engined cars.

For all other diesel-engined vehicles we shall apply the recently agreed European standard on emission limits (directive 88/77/EEC) at the earliest date permitted, 1 October 1990.

Discussions are continuing in the European Community on a tightening of the 88/77/EEC standards and on the introduction of particulate limits for these categories of vehicle. Both the 88/77/EEC standards and any later standards will apply to the heaviest lorries.

Road Accidents (Deaths)

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the number of British people who die each year from road accidents; and what are the Government's plans to reduce that number.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Over 5,000 people are needlessly killed on our roads each year. Two years ago we set a target of reducing the number of casualties by a third by the year 2000. We are on course for doing so. We are now saving over 550 lives a year compared with the position two years ago, even though traffic has increased greatly.

A total of 75 per cent. of casualties occur on local roads. At a meeting with local authority political leaders today we reviewed our commitment to joint action to reduce casualties. We agreed that casualty reduction targets would in future be set at local and regional level, and we endorsed a package of measures to increase the number of low cost road engineering schemes which are so effective in saving lives.

This will give a fresh impetus to efforts to reduce the number of people killed and injured.

Thames Riverbus

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what public money has been paid to the Thames riverbus service; under what authority it was paid; what conditions were imposed; and what has been done to protect the public interest and to ensure that the service to the paying public is continued.

Mr. Portillo: The Government have not yet received a formal request for the first payment under the agreement governing their grant for the riverbus service. Grant will be paid under section 17 of the Ministry of Transport Act 1919. Payment of grant is limited to its application to the promotion and improvement of the service, and is conditional on payment of a private sector contribution of four times the grant and on the provision of appropriate management reports and accounts. The Government may terminate the grant agreement in the event that a regular service is not maintained to Charing Cross, Festival, Swan Lane and West India piers. The recent inauguration of new services to Greenwich and Greenland piers and suspension of the services to Cherry Garden pier are matters for the operator.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Lebanon

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the Arab League's initiative towards the Lebanon.

Mr. Waldegrave: We and our European partners fully support the Arab League's efforts to find a solution to the crisis in Lebanon.

Namibia

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information Her Majesty's Government have from the United Nations regarding the procedures for registration and voting in the election to be held in Namibia in accord with resolution 435; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The administrator general's proclamation on registration of voters, agreed with the United Nation's special representative for Namibia, issued on 30 June.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has from the United Nations on the effect of the implementation of resolution 435 of the former Koevet forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The United Nation's special representative has expressed concern about unacceptable conduct by counter-insurgency elements in SWAPO. We are supporting UN efforts to reach a satisfactory solution to the problem.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has from the United Nations regarding the deployment of the additional 500 United Nations police in Namibia; whether the United Nations now proposes to further increase that number; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The additional group of 500 police monitors has begun to arrive in Namibia. The United

Nations's Secretary-General, who has responsibility for the strength of the UN force in Namibia, has not requested a further increase in the number of police monitors.

Cambodia

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policies on the future role of the Khmer Rouge army in the Government of Cambodia; whether Her Majesty's Government will be represented at the Paris peace conference on Cambodia in July; and if Her Majesty's Government's representatives will oppose a solution permitting the return of the Khmer Rouge to Cambodia.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 11 April 1989. A central objective of our policy is to prevent the Khmer Rouge returning to power by force. In principle we expect to attend the international conference on Cambodia in Paris.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of men on rule 43 in Wandsworth prison on 27 June.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Four hundred and nineteen.

Inquests

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to make it mandatory for coroners to require all relevant medical records to be supplied to them before an inquest is concluded.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Coroners are independent judicial officers. In accordance with the Coroners Act 1988 they make thorough inquiries into all deaths referred to them, but it is for the coroners to decide how to conduct their inquiries. My right hon. Friend is not persuaded that it would be appropriate to adopt the hon. Member's suggestion.

Cremation Certificates

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the current fee recommended by the British Medical Association for the completion of a confirmatory cremation certificate; if he is intending to implement the recommendations of the Broderick report to end the requirement for two doctors to sign cremation certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that the fee currently recommended by the British Medical Association for the confirmatory medical certificate for cremation is £23·50. After carefully considering the results of wide consultation, my right hon. Friend has decided that the confirmatory certificate should be retained, at least for the time being.

Immigration (Turkey)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many immigration officers are operating in Turkey; what is the purpose of their presence there; and what are their duties.

Mr. Renton: One chief immigration officer and seven immigration officers are working in Istanbul and three immigration officers are working in Ankara. They are serving as entry clearance officers dealing with visa applications at the consulate general and embassy respectively.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of applications made for asylum by persons coming from Turkey in each week since 1 April to the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Information is not readily available about asylum applications from persons coming from Turkey. The number of applications made by Turkish nationals on or shortly after arrival in this country from all countries was as follows:

Week ending	*Number*
8 April	23
15 April	29
22 April	83
29 April	74
6 May	326
13 May	198
20 May	366
27 May	335
3 June	345
10 June	482
17 June	579
24 June	883

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what instructions have been issued to immigration officers *(a)* operating in Turkey and *(b)* on boarding planes recently arrived from Turkey before passengers disembark; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Immigration officers operating in Turkey are working to the same instructions as entry clearance officers in other diplomatic posts abroad. During the period when immigration officers were boarding aircraft on arrival from Turkey their instructions were to ensure first that all British and other European Community nationals were able to disembark immediately. They were then to identify, as far as possible, those remaining passengers who seemed unlikely to require lengthy examination with a view to allowing them to proceed quickly to the main immigration control. Those likely to require lengthy examination were disembarked and dealt with separately, so as to avoid excessive delays and inconvenience to other passengers arriving at the main control.

Mail Interception

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) under what powers he authorises the interception of mail within the United Kingdom; what agencies he authorises to carry out the interception of mail; to what extent officials of such agencies convey information obtained from interception of mail to third parties; and if he will make a statement;

(2) under what powers immigration officers intercept letters sent by post within the United Kingdom; from whom immigration officers seek authorisation to intercept such mail; and if he will make a statement;

(3) under what powers the police intercept letters sent by post within the United Kingdom; from whom police have to obtain authorisation to intercept mail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The Interception of Communications Act 1985 makes provision for the interception of a communication in the course of its transmission by post in accordance with a warrant issued by the Secretary of State and provides for safeguards as to the disclosure of information obtained in this way. Information about the arrangements for interception is included in the annual reports of the commissioner appointed under the Act, which are laid before Parliament.

Prisons (Food Hygiene)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Government have any plans to lift the exemption of the Crown, as regards prisons, to the Food Hygiene (General) Regulations 1970; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans at present for the removal of Crown immunity under the Food Hygiene (General) Regulations 1970 from prison establishments. Existing internal arrangements within the prison service are considered to be sufficient to set and monitor standards required by the regulations. The position on Crown immunity is kept under regular review.

Parole Decisions

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners were informed of their parole decision after their eligibility date *(a)* in 1988, and *(b)* the latest available figure for 1989; what was the average delay period for each year; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what percentage of prisoners who received their parole decision after their parole eligibility date were refused parole *(a)* in 1988, and *(b)* for the latest date available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Statistics are not readily available in the form requested. However, at present there are unacceptable delays in the parole scheme which are an unnecessary source of anxiety to inmates and their families, and present problems to prison service staff. These delays result from increases in the longer sentenced prison population and a growing workload for the parole unit. Cases needing to be referred to the Parole Board, requiring the most detailed consideration and thus taking longest to complete, are delayed on average by two or three months. About a third of cases not seen by the Parole Board are also subject to delays, averaging about a month.

A number of steps have been taken to combat the delays. Overtime working and a significant increase in parole unit staffing have been authorised. Our target is for significant reductions in the delays by the end of the year. The Parole Board has helped by increasing the number of panels held and the cases considered at each one; and its membership has also been increased. Parole unit procedures are being streamlined and further consideration is being given to other measures to tackle the problem.

Radio Station (Coventry)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reconsider the decision not to allocate a medium wave frequency to the BBC local radio station due to cover Coventry and Warwickshire; what is the difference in area and quality of reception between the allocated VHF frequency and a medium wave frequency for the proposed station; what estimate he has of the population of Coventry who can receive only medium wave, as opposed to VHF, transmissions; whether the option of split frequency transmission to cater for the city's ethnic population was considered when deciding whether or not to award a medium wave frequency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Paragraph 8.2 of the Broadcasting White Paper (Cm 517, November 1988) confirmed our proposal that radio broadcasting should increasingly take place without unnecessary simulcasting. This will enable more frequencies to be released for additional services, such as community radio stations, thus enhancing listener choice. Recent plans have therefore been made on the basis that both new independent and BBC stations should broadcast on single frequencies. BBC Radio Warwickshire will accordingly broadcast on VHF/FM only.

Details of its coverage are not yet available, since the technical arrangements for the service have not yet been finalised. In comparison with medium wave, the VHF/FM signal is subject to much less interference, especially during hours of darkness, and provides better quality for stereo and data transmission. The BBC has launched an FM listening campaign to make listeners more aware of the benefits of FM broadcasts.

Racial Harassment

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what basis boroughs were chosen to be, or excluded from being, targeted in the campaign on racial harassment launched in February.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Metropolitan police's campaign to tackle racial harassment launched in February 1989 was the third part of an initiative which had started with pilots in Newham, Tower Hamlets and Redbridge in the two preceding years. I understand from the commissioner that in the 1989 campaign, 19 London boroughs were targeted; and that they were chosen on the basis of the perceived need for a campaign in the area.

Airports (Policing)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the findings of the working party established to review arrangements for the policing of airports.

Mr. Hurd: The working party on the policing of airports was established, under Home Office chairmanship, as part of the Government response to the report of the fourth session of the Transport Select Committee.

The working party comprised representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland), the Aerodrome Owners Association, the Joint Airports Committee of Local Authorities, BAA plc, Heathrow and Manchester airports, the Department of Transport, the Ministry of Defence, the

Scottish Home and Health Department, and Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary. Their task was to examine arrangements for policing airports, including the way costs are met, and to consider whether any changes should be made.

The Transport Committee's inquiry covered the whole field of airport security, currently governed by the Aviation Security Act 1982. Many of its recommendations dealt with the arrangements for checking passengers and baggage which are not direct police responsibilities at airports, and which were not therefore addressed directly by the working party. Part of the Transport Committee's study necessarily focused on the role of the police at airports, in particular the relationship between the functions performed by the police and the national aviation security programme administered by the Department of Transport. The Committee recommended that means be found to employ the undoubted expertise of the police to the best effect in airport security procedures, and that the present system of designation, under the Aviation Security Act, be abolished and replaced with one which allows flexibility of response without imposing uncontrollable financial costs on airport operators. The working party therefore concentrated on these two issues.

The main recommendations of the working party are for a better-informed means of assessing the need for, and nature and level of, policing at an airport; the provision of a suitable forum in which policing issues can be effectively discussed at airports; and a central arbitral system to assist in the resolution of any differences which cannot be resolved at the local airport level.

The working party examined, but rejected, the idea that the first of these matters could be based on mathematical formulae; the nature of, and variation between, airports, as well as the nature of policing itself, make such an approach unworkable. It did, however, conclude that there was some scope for the introduction of more objectivity and consistency in assessing an airport's policing needs. The report contains a list of considerations upon which such assessments should be based and recommends that, using this list as guidance, police and airport managements should jointly draw up an "airport policing profile".

The working party also proposes a more effective formal means by which policing issues can be fully aired at airports by means of small committees comprising representatives only of police and airport managements. These should not be bound by rigid terms of reference but should be able to discuss any airport policing matters including costs and should be able to meet as frequently as necessary at the instigation of either party.

The working party recommends that in the event of unresolvable local disputes between airport authorities and police the professional advisers of the two principal Departments concerned—Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary and the Department of Transport's chief aviation security inspector—should provide the airport policing committee with an indication of the advice they would give to the Secretary of State in the event of a request for designation, de-designation or a determination on policing costs. If agreement still proves impossible either side is left with the option of an appeal to the Secretary of State.

Following the Lockerbie disaster, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and I invited the working party to reconvene to consider whether, in the light of that tragedy, any changes should be made to the proposals or any further recommendations made. After careful discussion, the working party has concluded that the original proposals should stand. The working party was concerned with the relationship between the responsibilities of police and airport managements. It was neither composed nor tasked to assess detailed physical security arrangements, about which the Lockerbie incident raised questions which are being addressed separately by my right hon. Friend.

The working party's proposals are aimed at practical improvements in co-operation between police and airport authorities. They do not require new legislation. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I commend them to chief officers of police. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will similarly commend them to representatives of the aviation industry.

I have today placed in the Library of the House a copy of the working party's report and supplementary note.

Independent Radio

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on his legislative proposals for the allocation and ownership of independent radio licences, and for combating unlicensed broadcasting.

Mr. Hurd: Our proposals for the allocation of independent radio licences were set out in paragraph 8.4 of the White Paper "Broadcasing in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality" (Cm. 517, November 1988). For national stations they envisaged allocation by competitive tender, subject to a requirement that each service should provide a diverse programme service calculated to appeal to a variety of tastes and interests and not limited to a single narrow format. We now propose that the form of competitive tender for independent national radio licences should in its main essentials follow that proposed for Channels 3 and 5 in my statement on commercial television on 13 June at columns 710-13.

Independent national and local radio licences will be awarded for periods up to a maximum of eight years. The presumption is that on the expiry of a licence the service will fall to be readvertised; but we propose that the Radio Authority should have discretion not to readvertise a service where it believes that this would not serve to broaden listener choice.

Paragraph 8.4 of the White Paper envisaged that no one would be able to control more than one national licence and more than six local licences. These limits will be capable of variation in subordinate legislation. In order to prevent, for instance, one person from gaining control of the six largest local stations we propose that the rules on concentration of radio ownership should be capable of being supplemented, in subordinate legislation, by reference to the coverage or size of stations. We also propose that there should be power for limits to be set in subordinate legislation on degrees of financial interest not amounting to control.

My noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I are considering a range of measures to strengthen the legislation on unlicensed broadcasting. Among these, we propose to broaden the offence in section 1(1) of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 of using wireless telegraphy apparatus without a licence, and to make it an

offence to advertise on, or supply certain goods and services to, an unlicensed broadcasting station. We propose that these offences should be triable either way, and that on indictment the maximum penalties should be two years' imprisonment, or an unlimited fine, or both. We also intend to strengthen present search, seizure and forfeiture powers.

Night Hours Broadcasting

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the proposal in the broadcasting White Paper that the night hours of one BBC channel should be assigned to the ITC.

Mr. Hurd: We have considered carefully the comments we have received on this proposal. We have decided on balance that it would be better to leave the BBC with both sets of night hours in order to enable a faster start to be made with the development of subscription services. The BBC will, therefore, be permitted to retain both sets, on condition that it makes the fullest possible use of them for raising subscription income, consistent with its public service obligations.

When we come to consider the level of the licence fee from April 1991 onwards we will review the use which the BBC is making of the night hours. The level at which the licence fee is set will take account of the BBC's capacity to generate subscription revenue from two sets of night hours.

Liverpool Passport Office

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the industrial dispute at the Liverpool passport office has now been settled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Following meetings between management and unions, a conditional offer has been made to the unions and has been accepted by them. As part of the settlement the unions have undertaken to co-operate over the transfer of work between offices and in special measures to clear the current backlog of passport applications. For its part, management has agreed to an increase of 45 posts on top of the increase of 158 already agreed in the number of permanent staff. This total of 203 on a complement of 1,000 compares with the 381 requested by the unions and will be found by converting an equivalent number of temporary posts. All the new posts are subject to further scrutiny and examination in a full staffing review to be undertaken later this year by the Home Office staff inspectors supported by work measurement and other experts from the Treasury.

Those members of the Liverpool passport office who were on strike have now returned to work. The main task now is to clear the very large backlog of unprocessed passport applications that were sent to the Liverpool passport office. Arrangements are being made for some of this work to be transferred to other passport offices, but it will be many weeks before all the applications that have been received are dealt with. In addition, arrangements are being made to provide free two-year extensions to expired passports submitted by post to other passport offices.

To assist travellers whose applications have been delayed, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has contacted other Governments to see whether, in the special circumstances in which we find ourselves, they would accept expired British passports or (where they do not already do so) British visitor's passports (BVPs). The Bahamas, West Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Jamaica, Spain, the United States of America and Yugoslavia, have indicated that they will accept expired standard passports for a period up to 30 September 1989. The Bahamas, Barbados, Cyprus, Hong Kong, Jamaica and the Seychelles will accept BVPs for the same period. Travellers with an urgent need to travel in western Europe or one of the other countries for which a BVP is acceptable can obtain a BVP from any main post office in England, Scotland or Wales. BVPs are now available on Mondays to Fridays and on Saturday mornings. Where a standard passport has been applied for in good time and has not been processed, BVP fees will be refunded on application. For countries where a BVP is not acceptable, travellers who have an urgent requirement should call in person at the most convenient passport office, where every effort will be made to ensure that a suitable travel document is provided.

The settlement of this damaging dispute paves the way for the necessary long-term measures to improve this service to the public.

Terrestrial Broadcasting

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the privatisation of the terrestrial broadcasting transmission system in the light of the Price Waterhouse report.

Mr. Hurd: In the White Paper on broadcasting we stated that our objective was to move the terrestrial transmission system progressively into the private sector. The Price Waterhouse report analysed the various ways in which this could be achieved. In the light of that report, we confirm that our intention is to privatise the transmission networks owned and operated by the BBC and the IBA as soon as we are in a position to do so. We believe that a move into the private sector will reinforce the pressures for efficiency, and will enable more intensive use to be made of the valuable transmission infrastructure.

We have considered carefully the different possible options for the structure of a privatised transmission industry. On balance we have decided that the best approach would be to set up two national transmission networks, rather than to restructure the system in the way proposed in the Price Waterhouse report.

The BBC's transmission responsibilities are rooted in its royal charter which lasts until the end of 1996. It has indicated that it does not wish to have these responsibilities transferred to a private transmission operator. We have therefore decided that the BBC should retain its transmission responsibilities, including for the world service, until the expiry of the charter, unless it wishes to divest itself of those responsibilities earlier. The position will be reviewed at that point with a view to privatisation. In the meantime the BBC will be confined to transmitting its own services, and will not be permitted to compete for the transmission of new broadcasting or telecommunications services. We are concerned that the private transmission market should develop in a fair manner; and, while the BBC's transmission operation remains in the public sector, there would be insuperable

difficulties in ensuring that the BBC entered this market in a way which would be perceived to be fair to its competitors.

The IBA has welcomed the proposal that its transmission operation should be privatised, and we will be including the necessary provisions in our legislative proposals on broadcasting. We shall be considering further the time scale for privatisation, bearing in mind the possible implications for the ITV contracts. We have taken note of the wide regional variations in the cost of transmission, and of the possible consequences of these variations for the smaller Channel 3 companies. We propose that there should be a uniform tariff for Channel 3 companies based on their share of the total Channel 3 income, taking account of any subscription and sponsorship revenue as well as net advertising revenue. This arrangement would be reviewed following decisions to be taken on the future of the BBC transmission system after 1996.

The private transmission company which takes over the IBA's transmission operation will have a powerful market position and the transmission market is likely to be dominated by a small number of major players for the foreseeable future. We therefore consider that economic as well as technical regulation will be necessary. We propose to amend the Telecommunications Act 1984 to enable this regulation to be carried out by the Director General of Telecommunications. This regulatory framework will be designed to ensure that the transmission market operates fairly, and also that the coverage, quality and reliability of transmission systems is maintained.

DEFENCE

Naval Personnel (Shore Postings)

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have occurred and are planned in the proportion of naval seagoing personnel in shore postings.

Mr. Neubert: Since 1980 the proportion of naval seagoing personnel in shore postings has reduced from about 60 per cent. to about 50 per cent. The planned proportion is expected to remain at approximately this level.

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes in allowances have been made affecting those naval personnel working away from their families both at sea and on shore postings.

Mr. Neubert: I take it that my hon. Friend's question is in relation to the changes that have occurred as a result of the joint Ministry of Defence-Treasury review of armed forces allowances which was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 9 May 1988, column *2*, and which took effect from 1 October 1988.

As a result of the review, the various allowances for which personnel can qualify have been related more closely to the accommodation policies of the services. Because service in a seagoing ship inevitably results in separation from family, the Royal Navy has traditionally operated a policy of flexibility with regard to accompanied service. Personnel could choose whether their families should follow them from place to place on each new appointment or draft, or whether the family should settle in one place while only the husband moved about.

As a result of the review, the Royal Navy's flexible approach has been formalised to the extent that an individual must explicitly declare his option of "family mobility" or "family stability" on the occasion of each new appointment or draft. This will determine eligibility for a range of appropriate allowances. The man who is separated or at sea will be eligible for the following: the longer service at sea bonus when serving in a seagoing ship; separation allowance, if separated by more than 200 miles ashore; and free travel warrants to return home from his place of duty (15 per year if serving in a seagoing ship, 12 if serving ashore plus any additional warrants earned during former sea service). He also receives the benefit of free accommodation on board ship and when living ashore in barracks or in mess.

Sailors (Families)

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what impact competitive tendering for repairs has had and is expected to have on sailors' access to their families during periods when ships are undergoing repairs.

Mr. Neubert: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to repairs undertaken away from the port at which the ship is normally based. We have had only one major experience of this so far with HMS Penelope (base port Portsmouth) being repaired at Southampton. It is thus too early to be definitive. A variety of circumstances could exist, and separation from families could be increased, but the following measures are designed to minimise it:

(a) If naval married quarters are available in the area where the ship is being repaired families can, if the repairs are expected to take six months or more, take up residence with the husband at the repair location, thus maintaining family unity.

(b) If the repair is likely to last more than 12 months, personnel would be eligible for assistance to sell or let their existing private property and purchase or rent a new house at the repair location. This, again, would maintain family unity.

(c) In cases where a family move would not be appropriate, personnel are entitled, subject to certain conditions, to 24 free travel warrants per year. In addition, personnel who serve at sea accrue warrant credits of one free travel warrant for every two months' sea service. These warrants could also be used, in addition to the 24 mentioned above, for journeys home during the repair period. In addition, separation allowance may become payable, dependent on the distance between the man's home and the location of the refit.

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are being taken to reduce the problems of separation from families in the Royal Navy.

Mr. Neubert: Because of its seagoing commitments, some separation is inevitable in the Royal Navy. However, personnel who opt for "family mobility" are provided with a range of measures to assist in keeping the family together. These include: *(a)* the provision of naval married quarters in all the main port areas; *(b)* the introduction of a new home owners "mobility package" which provides for the reimbursement of certain expenses on sale and purchase of a private house, or alternatively for certain expenses incurred in letting or repossessing it;

and *(c)* the payment of removal expenses and disturbance allowance; and the payment of boarding school allowance to provide continuity of education for children in the face of frequent parental moves.

Defence Quality Assurance

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether consultations with the trade unions are now complete regarding the proposed move to Teesside of headquarters and laboratories of the Directorate General of Defence Quality Assurance now at Woolwich and Bromley.

Mr. Sainsbury: Consultations have taken place and I have carefully considered the points made by the trade unions. None of the points was new to me and I can confirm that planning will now proceed with the aim of transferring some 1,500 jobs to Teesside during 1993 to 1995. I am establishing a joint consultative committee which will be a forum for consultations with the trade unions as the work proceeds.

F111 Aircraft

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much expenditure has been incurred to date on design work at RAF Upper Heyford to assess the cost of deploying different types of F111 aircraft.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No design work has been undertaken to assess the cost of deploying different types of F111 aircraft at RAF Upper Heyford.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his reply of 13 June to the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) *Official Report*, column *689*, how much expenditure has been incurred to date on design work at RAF Upper Heyford to assess the cost of deploying additional F111 aircraft.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No design work has been undertaken to assess the cost of deploying additional F111 aircraft at RAF Upper Heyford.

WE 177 Nuclear Bomb

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his reply of 29 June *Official Report*, column *531*, to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), whether any agreements have been concluded with *(a)* the United States Government, *(b)* Boeing Aerospace, *(c)* Martin Marietta, *(d)* British Aerospace and *(e)* Hunting Engineering regarding the study of procurement options for the possible replacement of the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 29 June at column *531*.

HMS Southampton

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will make a decision on awarding the contract for the repair and refit of HMS Southampton.

Mr. Sainsbury: Shortly.

ROF, Enfield

Mr. John Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what meetings were held by his Department with subcontractors who worked for the former Royal Ordnance Factory at Enfield, in the 12 months prior to the announcement of its sale to British Aerospace; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him during the Adjournment debate on Friday 23 June at column *676*.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the monthly statistics for the latest available four months for employment training for the Training Agency covering the Doncaster area, showing *(a)* entrants in each monthly period, and the number of cumulative entrants, broken down by sex, *(b)* the length of time they had been out of work, their ethnic backgrounds and whether or not they had any disabilities, *(c)* the total number of currently filled places and *(d)* the number of trainees in each monthly period on project and employer placements.

Mr. Nicholls: Information for entrants to Employment Training in the latest available four months is provided in Table 1. The other information requested on duration of unemployment prior to joining the programme and the ethnic background of entrants is provided in Table 2. There were 5,436 filled places in the Training Agency area including Doncaster at 23 June 1989, the latest date for which information is available. Information for trainees on project and employer placements on the last Friday of each month is provided in Table 3.

Table 1
Employment Training Entrants

Month	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*
February	1,088	317	1,405
March	791	282	1,073
April	725	230	955
May	669	267	876
TOTAL	3,273	1,096	4,309

Table 2
Employment Training
characteristics of Entrants (February to May)[1]
Wakefield/Barnsley/Doncaster area office

	Percentage
Unemployment duration (months)	
3 to 6	20
6 to 12	34
13 to 23	15
24+	11
Ethnic origin	
1. White	97
2. Black/African/Caribbean	[2]—
3. Indian/Pakistan/Bangladeshi/Sri Lankan	1
4. None of these	1
5. I prefer not to say	1
PWD[3]	
Yes	8
No	92

[1] All figures are percentages, figures may not total 130 because of rounding.
[2] Less than 0·5 per cent.
[3] PWD—People with disabilities. Those trainees answering whether they had a long-term health problem or disability which affected the type of work they could do. This figure is calculated for December to March.

Table 3
Employment Training
Estimated numbers of trainees on project and employer placements on the last Friday of each month

	On projects	*With employers*
February	3,000	1,500
March	3,000	1,500
April	3,100	1,500
May	3,200	1,600

Benefits

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to change the full extent normal rule; when these will be implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply from my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on 16 December 1988 at columns *752-53*. We intend to introduce these measures in the autumn.

Tourism (North-West)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the top 20 tourist attractions in the north-west in numbers visiting or attending; and if he will indicate the attendances in each instance for the last year which they are available.

Mr. Nicholls: The English Tourist Board's annual survey of visits to tourist attractions gives the following figures for the North West regional tourist board area in 1988:

	Number of Visits
Blackpool Pleasure Beach	6,500,000
Albert Dock, Liverpool	3,500,000
Pleasureland, Southport	1,500,000
Blackpool Tower	1,477,500
Frontierland, Morecambe	1,000,000
Stapeley Water Gardens	1,000,000
Chester Zoo	896,822
Croxteth Country Park	750,000
Louis Tussaud's Waxworks, Blackpool	750,000
Sandcastle World of Water, Blackpool	695,000
Etherow Country Park	600,000
Liverpool Museum	585,222
Knowsley Safari Park	509,577
Tate of the North, Liverpool	500,000
Heaton Park, Manchester	500,000
Camelot Theme Park	450,000
Merseyside Maritime Museum	409,012
Blackpool Zoo	360,480
Chester Visitor Centre	346,000
Lyme Park	300,000

Employment Training

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* training managers and *(b)* training agents have been refused approved status for employment training since its inception in September 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: None. All training agents and training managers are currently working towards full approved status and have until September 1990 to achieve it.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people *(a)* have refused to participate in employment training and *(b)* have left employment training before completing the training (i) nationally and (ii) by training agency area.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Tourism

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he will notify the *(a)* House, *(b)* British Tourist Authority and *(c)* national boards of his conclusions after studying the report of the review of tourism he initiated in July 1988.

Mr. Fowler: I expect soon to be able to let the House know the outcome of my review of Government support for the tourism industry. I will write to the chairman of the English Tourist Board and the British Tourist Authority as soon as the House has been informed.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

"Nuclear Accidents and the Farmer"

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why his Department's publications office at Alnwick, Northumberland was out of stock of the leaflet entitled "Nuclear Accidents and the Farmer" at the beginning of June; and what is the present position.

Mr. Ryder: A heavy initial demand meant that the Department's publications store was temporarily out of stock of the leaflet at the beginning of June. Following a further reprint, supplies have now been replenished.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why his Department's area offices in Yorkshire and Humberside have not yet received any supplies of his Department's leaflet entitled "Nuclear Accidents and the Farmer"; if he will list by region and location what area offices *(a)* have this leaflet and *(b)* do not have this leaflet; and when he expects all his offices will have this in stock.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 10 April, column *365*. Stocks were originally held by the Ministry's publications unit at Alnwick and at regional and divisional offices. Following a recent reprint, supplies are being distributed to all area offices.

Potato Stocks

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list by region, the estimated stocks of potatoes for this year's current

growing season; what were the comparable figures last year; and what assessment he has made as to whether this year's stock will meet demand;

(2) if he will make a statement as to what reviews and discussions he is having in respect of this year's potato crop in England and Wales due to the lack of rain and a possible consequent potato shortage.

Mr. Ryder: It is too early to make an assessment of the 1989 potato crop. I have asked the Potato Marketing Board to send information on stocks to the hon. Member.

Lead in Food

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research he is conducting into lead levels in food produced adjacent to motorways or other main roads.

Mr. Ryder: My Department is not conducting research into lead levels in food produced adjacent to motorways or other main roads. My Department did fund research on this between 1980 and 1983 at the university of Nottingham. This showed that only a small proportion of vegetables grown next to the M1 exceeded statutory lead levels before washing. Washing and removal of outer leaves halves deposited lead levels which means that the vegetables in this study have been below the statutory level once treated for human consumption. My officials will be studying the results of the recent research carried out by Dr. Ward at the university of Surrey.

Torry Research Station

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the projects at the Torry research station in Aberdeen which will be discontinued as a result of the Barnes review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The projects which are to be discontinued are as follows:

Plant design—the development of monitoring and control systems
The design and development of a multipass freezer
Energy utilisation in fish processing
A study of fundamental principles in the design and development of new smoking processes
Development of a machine to produce uncoated formed fillets
Processing machinery—separation of meat from shell fish to improve yield
Microbial spoilage of packaged fish and shell fish with a view to devising and applying methods of extending shelflife
Innovation of fish and shell fish products and relevant process technology
Shell fish processing with a view to more efficient utilisation
Textural modification of recovered flesh
Improved chilling and handling of sea fish and farmed fish to improve yield and quality
Innovation and characterisation of added value products from industrial and waste fish resources and development of relevant new pilot plant processes or existing processes
Improvements in the efficiency of processing fish and smoking
Investigation of chemical/physical methods of reducing the rate of deterioration of bulk-stored fish at sea
Assessment of the requirements for the introduction of freezing-at-sea on small fishing vessels
Study of cultured fish in relation to general quality aspects and to their suitability for processing
The efficient use of recovered fish flesh for human consumption
Applications of electronics and physical sensors in fish processing

Detailed information on these was placed in the Library on 20 February 1989 and steps are now being taken to implement the decisions announced in the reply given on 28 June 1989 to my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), c. *466*.

Food Inspection

Mr. Michael: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has made regarding EC document 8062/88; and whether he has urged the EC to recognise the role of United Kingdom district councils in the inspection of slaughterhouses and food hygiene duties.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My officials have made it clear in discussion on this proposal that it is premature to consider arrangements for veterinary checks in advance of agreement on more fundamental aspects of the animal health arrangements to apply within the single market.

I am not aware of any proposals which would seek to change the existing role of district councils in slaughterhouse inspections or food law enforcement.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the findings of the Association of District Councils that there is no evidence to suggest that the veterinary presence in export slaughterhouses has contributed to any significant improvement in the protection of public health.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We have always maintained that the presence of veterinary surgeons is not essential to guarantee satisfactory standards of hygiene in abattoirs. Veterinary supervision is required if plants are to be approved to export. This is not an additional requirement but a different one. Domestic slaughterhouses rely largely on environmental health officers whose professional status is of the highest order.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is his policy towards placing total reliance on the inspection and certification of meat by veterinarians in other European Community countries as against the practice of inspection of incoming meat consignments by environmental health officers in the United Kingdom;

(2) what assessment he has made of the health implications of placing total reliance on the inspection and certification of meat by veterinarians in other EC countries and of the current practice of inspection of incoming meat consignments by environmental health officers in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In accordance with Community rules, enforcement authorities physically inspect only a sample of consignments of meat from other member states. Meat traded between member states must be covered by a certificate signed by an authorised veterinary officer confirming that the Community's strict hygiene rules have been observed. These arrangements work well and in negotiations on the single market I shall seek to ensure that adequate provision for such sample checks is retained.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what assessment he has made of the impact of European Community directives and regulations on the inspection of meat and meat products in the run-up to the single European market and on the likely changes in terms of staffing and finance that will be required to meet these requirements;

(2) What assessment he has had made of the impact of European Community directives and regulations on monitoring for health purposes of meat and meat products in the run-up to the single European market and on the likely changes in terms of staffing and finance that will be required to meet these requirements.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The arrangements for meat inspection in the single market will depend upon decisions still to be taken by the Council of Ministers and it is not yet possible therefore to estimate the effects on staffing and costs. It is clear, however, that we shall need to move towards a well-understood supervision system in all meat plants and we shall be discussing how this should be achieved with the interests concerned.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what assessment he has made of the impact of the veterinary presence in export slaughterhouses on the protection of public health;

(2) what assessment he has made of the health implications of the veterinary presence in export slaughterhouses.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Veterinary supervision is required if slaughterhouses are to engage in intra-Community trade or export to third countries. If this requirement was not met our industry would not be able to export meat and meat products. Last year this trade was worth £590 million. I have never accepted, however, that veterinary supervision is essential to guarantee satisfactory standards of hygiene.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what assessment he has made of the consistency of inspections in respect of food and food production in each member state of the European Community; and what steps he will take to ensure that the public of the United Kingdom is protected during the approach to the integrated single European market and after its completion.

Mr. Ryder: No detailed assessment has been made of the consistency of inspections of food and food production in each member state. However, we are aware, from the negotiations on the European Community directive on the official control of foodstuffs, of the different types of inspection systems in operation in other member states. The United Kingdom supported the EC directive on official control, adopted on 14 June 1989, which lays down general principles for food inspection across the Community, including the provision that inspections shall be carried out regularly and where non-compliance is suspected and that they shall cover all stages of the manufacturing and distributive cycle. The directive also provides for the Commission to make recommendations for co-ordinated inspection programmes to ensure a consistent approach. It is regarded as a first step towards the building of mutual confidence between member states in this very important area. Together with other measures envisaged, for example on food hygiene, this should ensure that the public is fully protected. In the meantime, the preamble to the official control directive indicates that there should be no changes to well-tried systems of food inspection; we consider that the United Kingdom system is in that category.

Price Fixing

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his reply to the hon. Member for South Shields of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *251*, if he will list the organisations invited to attend meetings to discuss the European Community price proposals in 1988, but which declined to do so; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* Each year a wide range of bodies and individuals submit representations on the Commission's price fixing proposals. These are made not only at meetings, which was the subject of the hon. Member's earlier question, but in writing. Organisations which choose not to attend meetings are on occasions among those who write, but I do not think it would be appropriate to list them.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Business Establishment Grants

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many companies in receipt of a cash grant from his Department to establish business in a particular place have discontinued such business within five years of establishment.

Mr. Newton: Information in the form requested is not available. However, it is possible to provide some figures for companies which have received regional selective assistance. Since the introduction of the current guidelines for RSA in November 1984, 24 companies which received RSA towards establishing new businesses in England are known to have discontinued such business. These companies received some £659,000. Recovery of grant is pursued in appropriate cases. By comparison, over 600 projects in total have received RSA to establish businesses in England over the same period with associated grant payments to date of £43·6 million.

Home Accidents (Deaths)

Sir David Price: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his latest estimate of the number of British people who die each year from accidents in their homes; and what are the Government's plans to reduce that number.

Mr. Forth: The latest available figure for deaths in the United Kingdom is for 1987, in which year there were 4,919 deaths from accidents in the home. There is a comprehensive legal framework which deals with the safety of consumer goods primarily, enforced by local authority trading standards departments, including the general safety requirement in the Consumer Protection Act 1987 which requires consumer goods to be reasonably safe, and specific regulations dealing with particular products or problems. This is complemented by safety awareness campaigns to alert people to the dangers they face every day in their own houses. The Government seek

to co-operate with non-governmental safety organisations whose aim is to promote safety awareness and safe products.

Palatine Graphic Arts Company

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all financial assistance, including that from the European Community, approved by his Department for Palatine Graphic Arts Company Limited, Liverpool, over the past five years, giving the name and amount of the grant or assistance, the date of approval and payment, the purpose of each and the terms and conditions imposed; and if he will take steps to ensure those terms have been and are being met in full.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* During the past five years my Department has made the following grants to Palatine Graphic Arts Co. Ltd., Liverpool:

Regional Development Grant I
Purpose of grant—towards the provision of approved plant and machinery and building works

Date paid	*Amount of grant* £
6 November 1984	2,967
5 December 1984	7,697
11 January 1985	8,461
5 July 1985	227
19 July 1985	359
25 October 1985	3,572
15 November 1985	8,572
26 January 1986	22,165
13 May 1986	33,254
	87,229

Regional development grant I was not dependent on the creation of jobs, but disposal of grant-aided assets within the conditions period must be notified and could result in the repayment of grant.

Regional Development Grant II

Purpose of grant	*Amount approved* £	*Date approved*	*Amount paid* £	*Date paid*
Provision of Chemotinex Etching bath, sanding machine moulding press and Chromalin processor and laminator. The creation of eight jobs formed part of this project[1]	33,000	15 December 1986	21,897	17 March 1987
Provision of exposure unit	1,688	13 July 1987	1,688	5 August 1987
Provision of stop and repeat machine	3,255	14 July 1987	3,255	5 August 1987
Provision of copper, etching bath[2]	6,356	23 March 1988	6,471	23 September 1988
Provision of scitex electronic scanning and page composition system	75,000	15 September 1988	75,000	24 February 1989
	119,299		108,311	

[1] The offer was based on the proposed creation of 11 jobs at £3,000 each, but in the event, only eight new jobs were created. As the total capital grant for the project, which included £8,250 payable to a leasing company, was the greater of the two, the grant was based on capital expenditure. However, the creation of the eight jobs formed part of the project.

[2] The discrepancy is due to the fact that the application was based on estimated costs and prices had increased at the time the claim was submitted.

Regional development grant II is made under standard conditions, including the obligation to notify my Department if jobs or assets are disposed of within the condition period and to repay such grant as may be required if the conditions are breached. Projects are subject to inspection.

Regional Selective Assistance

	£
30 October 1984	
Amount Offered	100,000
24 March 1986	
Amount Paid	6,461

The purpose of this grant was to assist with the purchase of new equipment which would provide time savings in artwork and make-up. The difference between the cost of the equipment and the amount of regional selective assistance paid was made up by regional development grant and the balance of RSA was not claimed.

Total grants paid were £212, 989.

My Department has not approved the payment of any grants involving EC funding and I am not aware of any EC funds being provided to the company from any other sources.

The relevant projects at this company have been inspected, most recently in August 1988 and again in June 1989, and I am satisfied that the terms and conditions under which grant assistance has been given are at present being met.

I understand that six of the eight jobs created under the grant approved on 15 December 1986 are at present vacant but that efforts to refill them are in hand. Under the terms and conditions under which grant is paid, the company is expected to refill such posts within two months—or longer at the Department's discretion—and a proportion of the grant can be reclaimed if this is not done.

Shipbuilding (Redundancies)

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total number of redundancies in the shipbuilding and shiprepair industries in Plymouth during the period 1 January 1979 to 31 December 1988.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* The information is not available.

Waste Paper

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received suggesting he should impose restrictions on the subsidised imports of waste paper from the United States of America and Canada.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* I have received a small number of letters expressing concern at the level of imports of de-inking grades of waste paper from the USA and Canada. I am not aware of any evidence to suggest that the current low levels of imports are having an adverse effect on the United Kingdom waste paper market, but I will continue to ensure that the situation is carefully monitored.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps are being taken to avert the expected shortfall in supply of waste paper, expected to be at its peak in 1993; what response has already been forthcoming from local authorities, paper merchants, newsprint producers and voluntary groups; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* A shortfall in the supply of de-inking grades of waste paper used as a raw material in the manufacture in the United Kingdom of newsprint is expected to build up over the next few years, possibly peaking in 1993, as additional manufacturing capacity comes on stream. Accordingly, my Department has organised a national series of 11 seminars to bring to the attention of local authorities and voluntary organisations the increasing number of opportunities which will become available to them to assist over the next three to four years in the collection of more newsprint grade waste paper. This programme of seminars is still under way. So far the response has been encouraging.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Attorney-General how many immigration appeals are outstanding in Scotland.

The Attorney-General: On 30 June 1989, 33 Scottish immigration appeals were awaiting listing, In a further 183 appeals, the papers have been sent to the parties and responses are awaited from the appellants' representatives.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Attorney-General if he has any proposals to improve the waiting time for immigration appeals in Scotland.

The Attorney-General: Responsibility for the administration of the immigration appellate authorities rests with the Lord Chancellor. Immigration appeals that are to be heard in Scotland are processed by the Leeds office of the IAA. As soon as case papers are received at Leeds they are copied to the parties. Thereafter the time taken for cases to come on for hearing depends on the parties, rather than the IAA. Once the parties indicate that they are ready to proceed, cases are listed for hearing within six to eight weeks, which is considered a reasonable time. Nevertheless, the Lord Chancellor's Department and the IAA will continue to monitor the number of Scottish cases sent to the parties or their representatives in the United Kingdom for which hearings have not been requested.

Visas

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Attorney-General what change there has been in the number of appeals from visitors refused entry clearance since the introduction of visa requirements for nationals of certain Commonwealth countries.

The Attorney-General: The numbers of appeals against refusal of entry clearance for temporary purposes, including visitors' and students' entry clearances in the last three years were as follows:

	Numbers
1986	1,522
1987	2,801
1988	6,138

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Community Charge

11. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will increase the level of students' grants to enable them to pay the poll tax.

Mr. Jackson: The rates of student grant for 1989-90 have already been announced. Students' discounted liability for the community charge was one of the factors considered in setting those rates.

National Curriculum

13. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has had any meeting during the last six months with representatives of science teachers to discuss the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend and I have met science teachers informally on several occasions and discussed various topics. No ministerial meetings have been arranged with their representatives specifically on the national curriculum.

29. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to publish translations of the national curriculum attainment targets and programmes of study in mathematics, science and English.

43. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to publish translations of the national curriculum attainment targets and programmes of study in mathematics, science and English.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has made available the mathematics and science national curriculum documents in Welsh. There are no plans to publish translations of these or the documents for English into any other languages. A short leaflet for parents on the national curriculum generally will however be published in ethnic minority community languages this autumn.

32. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress being made in implementing the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: Preparations continue to advance. My right hon. Friend has recently published his proposals for design and technology for all four key stages and English for key stages 2 to 4. A statutory order for English key stage 1 was made on 31 May.

Teacher Appraisal

14. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made on agreeing a system of teacher appraisal and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The national steering group overseeing the current pilot projects, on which the local authority and teacher associations are represented, will be submitting recommendations to my right hon. Friend next month for a national framework for teacher appraisal. In the light of these recommendations my right hon. Friend intends to make regulations in the autumn under section 49 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, requiring LEAs to implement schemes of appraisal covering all their teachers over the next few years.

Teachers (Resignations)

15. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the number of teachers who had submitted their resignations by 31 May.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the level of resignations from teachers submitted by 31 May.

Mr. Butcher: The latest available data are for the year ending March 1987. A total of 28,960 teachers left full-time service in the maintained nursery, primary and secondary sector in England. Of these, 1,760 transferred to full-time service elsewhere in the maintained sector in England and Wales and 2,900 to part-time service in the maintained sector. A further 8,500 retired and 450 died.

Student Loans

16. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what the cost of introducing top-up loans for students will be over the next 15 years assuming a yearly average inflation rate of 8 per cent.

Mr. Jackson: The Government do not expect inflation to remain at that level. The table shows the costs and savings associated with the introduction of top-up loans, on the hypothetical basis of 8 per cent. inflation annually from 1990. It is otherwise on the same basis and in the same format as the figures set out in annex E of Cm 520.

Costs and savings of top-up loans with 8 per cent. inflation
(£ million, 1990 prices)

	Net change in grant	*Net change in benefits*	*Gross loan outlay*	*Loan repayments*	*PSBR effect*
1990	0	−65	167	0	103
1991	−53	−64	234	−2	114
1992	−100	−63	290	−9	117
1993	−142	−62	340	−23	113
1994	−180	−61	386	−45	100
1995	−214	−60	428	−75	79
1996	−248	−60	470	−106	56
1997	−285	−61	520	−136	38
1998	−293	−63	535	−163	16
1999	−300	−64	548	−186	−3
2000	−302	−65	552	−206	−21
2001	−302	−65	552	−231	−46
2002	−302	−65	552	−262	−77
2003	−302	−65	552	−284	−99
2004	−302	−65	552	−296	−111
2005	−302	−65	552	−303	−118
2006	−302	−65	552	−303	−118
2007	−302	−65	552	−297	−112
2008	−302	−65	552	−300	−115
2009	−302	−65	552	−317	−133
2010	−302	−65	552	−339	−154
2011	−302	−65	552	−354	−169
2012	−302	−65	552	−364	−179
2013	−302	−65	552	−376	−191
2014	−302	−65	552	−385	−200
2015	−302	−65	552	−392	−207
2016	−302	−65	552	−397	−212
2017	−302	−65	522	−402	−217
2018	−302	−65	522	−405	−220
2019	−302	−65	552	−406	−222
2020	−302	−65	552	−410	−225
2021	−302	−65	552	−415	−230
2022	−302	−65	552	−420	−235
2023	−302	−65	552	−422	−237
2024	−302	−65	552	−422	−237
2025	−302	−65	552	−422	−237
2026	−302	−65	552	−422	−237
2027	−302	−65	552	−422	−237

18. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on the costs of the proposed student loan scheme in respect of administration, defaults and interest subsidy.

48. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the costs of the proposed student loan scheme in respect of administration, defaults and interest subsidy.

62. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the costs of the proposed student loan scheme in respect of administration, defaults and interest subsidy.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Members to my answer of 26 June to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) at columns *290-91*.

26. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received further representations on student loans following his statement of 19 June, *Official Report*, columns 21-33.

Mr. Jackson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) earlier today.

39. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to make public the participants in, and detailed proposals of, the arrangements for administering top-up loans for students.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend will announce further details of the arrangements for administering top-up loans in due course.

44. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate he has made of the cost of administering in its first year his student loan scheme.

Mr. Jackson: The preparatory work mentioned in my right hon. Friend's statement on 19 June, *Official Report*, columns 21-22 indicates administrative costs, excluding start-up costs, of between £8·5 million and £11·5 million in the first year in which top-up loans are available.

58. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the representations he has received in relation to the effect of the proposed student loans scheme on higher education in Scotland.

Mr. Jackson: We have considered carefully the representations we have received, particularly in relation to the longer Scottish courses. We have concluded that a loan facility for each year of a course is the right approach. Many students opt for higher education in Scotland rather than the shorter English degree, and we have no doubt that that will continue to be the case.

59. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement regarding the likely effect of top-up loans on access to higher education.

Mr. Jackson: The Government's education policies are designed to increase educational attainment at all levels, and to increase access to higher education. Top-up loans will offer students an additional source of funds while they are studying, and combined with the effect of the Government's other policies will enable there to be increased participation in higher education in the future.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how the proposed company for the administration of private sector loans to students is to be publicly accountable.

Mr. Jackson: The Department will have a permanent directorship on the board of the company, and we shall take such other steps as may be appropriate to ensure accountability.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make available a copy of the Price Waterhouse study of his proposed student top-up loans scheme.

Mr. Jackson: The document was commissioned by the Committee of London and Scottish Bankers as an initial feasibility study. I hope to place copies of the report in the Library shortly.

School Discipline

17. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on the implementation of the recommendations of the Elton report on school discipline.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has announced a range of measures in response to the Elton report. These include two planned education support grant activities, to tackle truancy and to address the problem of difficult pupils. In each case expenditure of up to £2·5 million will be supported in 1990-91. In addition, we are proposing that the management of pupil behaviour should be a national priority area within the local education authority training grants scheme for 1990-91, with grant to support £1·7 million of expenditure.

Higher Education (Students)

19. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase access for students to higher education.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has consistently made clear the Government's commitment to increasing participation in higher education. Our school reforms are designed to equip more pupils with the qualifications and motivation to enter higher education. We also want to widen access for those who do not hold traditional entry qualifications or are currently under-represented in higher education. Our objective, without sacrificing quality, is to promote a more flexible and more accessible system of higher education.

21. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students were in higher education at the beginning of the academic years 1978-79 and 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The available information is as follows:

Students in higher education: Great Britain

	Thousands
1978-79	766
1987-88	968

Data for 1988-89 are not yet available, but the figure is expected to be in the range 980,000 to 1 million.

Conductive Education

20. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for the future of conductive education in this country.

Mr. Butcher: Conductive education in Hungary is closely linked to the Hungarian system of education. It is, therefore, important for the approach to be tried out in the context of our education system. For that reason we are funding the evaluation of the experimental conductive education project in Birmingham. In time we would like to see conductive education added to the range of options available to disabled children in this country.

65. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he or officials from his Department last visited the conductive education centres in *(a)* Birmingham and *(b)* Budapest, Hungary.

Mr. Butcher: Members of Her Majesty's inspectorate, officials from the Department and the Department's senior medical adviser visited the Birmingham institute last November. A member of Her Majesty's inspectorate and an official from the Department will be visiting the institute in September. The Department's senior medical adviser visited the Peto institute in May 1988.

Teacher Shortages

22. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the measures he is taking to reduce teacher shortages.

25. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the measures he is taking to reduce teacher shortages.

56. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on teacher shortages.

61. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the measures to reduce teacher shortages.

Mr. Butcher: Our action programme to combat teacher shortages was launched three years ago at a cost so far of £50 million. The programme includes a £1,300 bursary for trainee teachers in maths, physics, CDT and, from this September, in chemistry; an energetic teacher recruitment publicity campaign spearheaded by the teaching as a career unit; in-service training for under-qualified teachers and new courses of initial teacher training. From next April, under the education support grant programme, we shall be supporting expenditure of up to £2 million on local measures to boost the recruitment of former teachers and mature entrants to teaching.

34. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the measures he is taking to reduce teacher shortages in London and the south-east.

63. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the measures he is taking to reduce teacher shortages in London and the south-east.

Mrs. Rumbold: Our action programme to combat teacher shortages has cost some £50 million over the last three years. Many of the measures have been targeted specifically at tackling the problems in London and the south-east. That action programme is continuing and will be reinforced as necessary. We have recently announced that the education support grant programme for 1990-91 will include support for up to £2 million on measures to boost the recruitment of mature entrants and teachers returning to the profession. I would expect many of the local authorities in London and the south-east to bid for inclusion within this programme.

Grant-maintained Schools

23. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the latest figures for the number of schools requesting grant-maintained status.

37. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement indicating the number of schools which have opted for grant-maintained status and the number of schools which are considering seeking grant-maintained status.

Mrs. Rumbold: To date, parents of pupils at 47 schools have voted to apply for grant-maintained status, and my right hon. Friend has approved 20 formal applications. I expect a good many more to follow.

Teachers (Local Pay Agreements)

24. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next intends to meet the teaching unions to discuss the introduction of localised pay agreements.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) and for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery).

Commission for Racial Equality

27. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met with representatives of the Commission for Racial Equality; and what was discussed.

Mr. Butcher: My hon. Friend the Minister of State last met representatives of the Commission for Racial Equality on 14 June 1988. They discussed aspects of the Education Reform Bill and the commission's proposals for a code of practice for the elimination of racial discrimination in education.

School Activities (Charges)

28. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the implementation of the legislation regarding charging for activities by schools.

35. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the implementation of the legislation regarding charging for activities by schools.

36. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has received from local authorities about difficulties arising from the new provisions relating to charging for school expeditions.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the working of regulations relating to charges for school trips.

54. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the implementation of the legislation regarding charging for activities by schools.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on the subject of charging for school activities. He has invited the local authorities and others to assist in monitoring the impact of the new arrangements. The legislation was drafted following consultation with the education service, and reflects the concern of respondents to confirm the principle of free education. We believe that it provides a sound framework for the continuation of a wide range of school activities, provided these are valued by parents as a worthwhile part of their children's education.

Institute of Horticultural Research

30. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next proposes to visit the Institute of Horticultural Research, Wellesbourne, at East Malling, Kent.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to do so.

School Libraries

31. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce an educational support grant for both primary and secondary school libraries.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend's proposed education support grant programme for 1990-91 which was announced in May does not include a specific activity related to school libraries. He will, however, consider the inclusion of such an activity in a future programme.

Postgraduate Research

33. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the subsistence allowance paid by research councils to postgraduate research students.

Mr. Jackson: The principal rates of postgraduate maintenance grant paid by the research councils in the academic year 1988-89 and to be paid in 1989-90 are as follows:

	1988-89 £	*1989-90* £
a. Students living away from home and attending an establishment in London	3,630	3,970
b. Students living away from home and attending an establishment outside London	2,975	3,125
c. Students living in the parental home	2,160	2,270

The Medical Research Council and the Agricultural and Food Research Council have decided to supplement maintenance grants to postgraduate students supported by them by an average of £500 per student with effect from 1989-90. Research students working on MRC's programme of AIDS research will receive a further supplement of £500.

All research councils make additional payments to disabled and older students and to those with dependants. They also pay approved fees and expenses for daily and end-of-term travel, fieldwork and conference attendance.

London Nautical School

38. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to ensure that the London nautical school in the London borough of Southwark continues to be available as a choice to parents throughout London for their children's education.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend on 30 June approved the application for grant-maintained status from the London nautical school, to take effect from 1 April 1990.

Nursery Schools

40. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to increase the funding for local education authority run nursery school places.

Mrs. Rumbold: Our plans for the current financial year allow for a continuation of the steady expansion of provision for the under-fives which has marked the last decade. Provision for local education authorities' spending on education in 1990-91 is still to be determined.

Biological Sciences (Research Assistants)

41. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the proportion of post-doctoral research assistants in biological sciences in the United Kingdom who are not British Nationals, and the availability of post-doctoral staff likely to remain in research careers in Britain.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not held centrally.

Primary Curriculum

42. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he has received from the National Curriculum Council about the primary curriculum.

50. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he has received from the National Curriculum Council about mixed ability classes in primary schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: At my right hon. Friend's request, the National Curriculum Council has been considering the framework for the primary curriculum. The council published non-statutory guidance on 30 June and copies have been sent to all maintained schools, local education authorities and others. The organisation of classes is a matter for local discretion. The council's guidance explains that there is a variety of ways in which pupils may be grouped, depending on the circumstances in each case.

Brain Drain

45. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a comprehensive evaluation of the effects of the brain drain on the quality of research in British universities.

Mr. Jackson: My reply of 17 February to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) at column *417*, showed that, over the last eight years, there has been a net inflow of academic staff to British universities. The Government recognise that concern has been expressed about the academic quality of those leaving the United Kingdom, but believe that it is for the universities themselves to be more rigorous in monitoring the flows, and to use the more flexible arrangements for academic pay now in place to help forestall and counteract them as necessary.

Universities (Research Contracts)

46. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of university income now comes from research contracts; and what was the comparable figure 10 years ago.

Mr. Jackson: Comparable information is not available over the period requested. However, between the academic years 1981-82 and 1987-88, the proportion of universities' total recurrent income derived from research grants and contracts rose from 12·9 to 19·6 per cent.

Secondary Education

47. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will detail the advantages which a genuine choice in secondary education brings.

Mr. Butcher: Greater parental choice encourages competition between schools and allows parents to influence decisions which determine the quality of

education. I believe that parents have a legitimate interest which they should be trusted to express and that competition encourages good schools to do even better and poorer schools to raise their sights.

Teachers (Southend)

49. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress is being made in securing the teachers required for secondary and junior schools in the Southend-on-Sea area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Responsibility for securing teachers for maintained schools rests with the local education authority which needs to take appropriate recruitment measures. Our action programme to combat teacher shortages, which has cost £50 million over the last three years, is designed to help authorities to that end.

LEAs (Training Grants)

51. **Mr. Radice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase the financial support available to local education authorities through the local education authority training grants scheme.

57. **Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase the financial support available to local education authorities through the local education authority training grants scheme.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) earlier today.

Gateshead CTC

52. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the target number of pupils for the proposed Gateshead city technology college.

Mr. Butcher: The proposed Gateshead city technology college is planning for an eventual enrolment of 900 pupils.

Teachers (European Community)

53. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department is taking any steps to recruit teachers from other EC member states.

Mr. Butcher: On 21 December 1988 the Council of Ministers of the European Communities adopted a directive that will enable a range of professionals, including teachers, to have their professional qualifications recognised for the purposes of practice in member states other than their own. The directive must be implemented by 1991. My right hon. Friend proposes to make regulations according the benefits of the directive to members of the teaching profession qualified in other member states from September this year. This should assist LEAs in their recruitment of teachers from other member states.

The Department is also supporting a project at the university of York which is recruiting and training teachers from France and Germany.

City Technology Colleges

60. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on progress to date in respect of city technology colleges.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 6 June to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) at column *10*.

London Docklands

64. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to improve the provision of primary school places arising out of developments in the London docklands.

Mrs. Rumbold: Developments in the London docklands are increasing the demand for primary school places. The provision of those places is a matter for the London borough of Newham, the Inner London education authority and, from 1 April 1990, the boroughs of Southwark and Tower Hamlets. My right hon. Friend, in determining annual capital guidelines, will continue to give a high priority to plans for additional school places from these and other local education authorities.

River Pollution

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to increase funding for research into pollution of the river ecosystem before privatisation of the water industry.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend will as usual consider expenditure on all areas of scientific research sponsored by this Department later this year, after studying advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. I understand that my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment is discussing, with the water industry and the National Rivers Authority advisory committee, future research arrangements in the water sector.

Natural Environment Research Council

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he will make it his policy to give the Natural Environment Research Council the necessary funds to develop work on environmental microbiology;

(2) whether he will make it his policy to give the Natural Environment Research Council the necessary funds to develop work into the risks and opportunities of modifying natural micro-organisms.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend will as usual consider expenditure on all areas of scientific research sponsored by this Department later this year, after studying advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether, in transferring funds for scientific research from universities to research councils, he will make it his policy to give the Natural Environment Research Council the necessary funds to develop work in the interactions of the land and atmosphere;

(2) whether, in transferring funds for scientific research to research counils, he will make it his policy to give the Natural Environment Research Council the necessary funds to develop work in atmospheric sciences.

Mr. Jackson: The planned transfer of funds from the Universities Funding Council to the research councils, recently announced by my right hon. Friend, corresponds to a change in the balance of funding responsibilities for university research projects sponsored by research councils. It is not intended that this will lead to any change in the total funding provided for university research through the two sides of the dual support system, nor to any change in the research council's scientific priorities.

Licensed Teachers

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what limit he is placing on the percentage of licensed teachers to be allowed on the staff of any one school.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has not set any predetermined limits. This will in each case be a matter for the school and the LEA concerned.

Local Management of Schools

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the implications of the local management scheme on staffing levels of the education departments in local authorities.

Mrs. Rumbold: As more decision-making is delegated to schools there should certainly be scope for economies in LEAs' central administration costs, but authorities will have a continuing strategic role under local management and will be able to hold back resources for key central services. Each authority will determine its own staffing needs for these.

ENVIRONMENT

Football Membership Scheme

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultation took place with the football clubs, the Football League, the Football Association and the Football Supporters Association over the structure, membership and powers of the Football Membership Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The role of the Football Membership Authority was considered by the working party which I chaired last summer on the national membership scheme and which included representatives of the Football Association and the Football League. I have had discussions with the football authorities about their wish to form the FMA. I have also had discussions about the FMA with the Football Supporters Association and the National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs.

Water

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment with reference to his announcement of charges to be introduced through a new clause in the Water Bill, how the figure of £800 per dwelling for new water and sewerage infrastructure and services was calculated; how soon he will be able to make more accurate figures available; and how these charges will vary across the United Kingdom.

Mr. Howard: The figure was an estimate of the average cost per new connection of investment in additional water supply and sewerage capacity, excluding infrastructure which could be requisitioned under clause 40 or clause 70 of the Water Bill (as amended by the House of Lords). Individual limits for water authorities will be included in their instruments of appointment published in August, and it is intended to give provisional figures for statutory water companies at the same stage with firm limits following in the autumn.

Waste Disposal

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make available in the Library the responses so far to the Green Paper on the role and functions of waste disposal authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We will shortly deposit in the Library copies of all responses so far received, where the authors have given permission so to do. I will write to the hon. Member at that time.

Nature Reserves

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those nature reserves assisted by grant from the Nature Conservancy Council, where it has been made a condition of grant that the shooting of birds or other creatures will continue.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is not available in the form requested and could be collected only at disproportionate cost. In considering land purchase proposals whether for themselves or by grant aid to NGO's the Nature Conservancy Council will normally expect the new owners to allow the traditional rights or uses of the land to continue and to alter the level or practice of these activities only when they are in conflict with the interests of conservation.

Reconnection Costs

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to amend section 33 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 in order that local authorities can recover costs of reconnection of supplies of gas and electricity incurred in paying arrears from landlords who then sell the house to evade debts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Yes. I refer the hon. Member to amendment No. 158, passed at Report stage of the Local Government and Housing Bill on 14 June at column 1090.

Housing in Multiple Occupancy

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department plans to simplify the powers and procedures referred to in the consultation paper on housing in multiple occupancy published last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: We shall be introducing amendments on a number of matters referred to in the consultation paper.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the proposed housing in multiple occupancy fitness standard referred to in Standing Committee on the Local Government and Housing Bill will include comprehensive fire safety provision such as means of detection and warning systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: We propose that the fitness standard should include means of escape from fire and fire prevention measures.

Baton Twirling

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received seeking the classification of baton twirling as a sport.

Mr. Moynihan: I have received no such representations. The recognition of a sport is a matter for the Sports Council to consider.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what appointments have recently been made to the Nature Conservancy Council; what relevant experience these people have that qualifies them for membership; whether he has received any representations concerning the appointments from pressure groups or other interested bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Five new members of the Nature Conservancy Council were appointed with effect from 1 April 1989—the Earl of Dalkeith, Dr. Bill Mutch, Earl Peel, Mr. Lindsay Waddell and Mr. William Wilder. They have a range of relevant qualifications and experience. More details are given in the press release issued by my noble Friend, the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside on 29 March 1989, a copy of which I have sent to the hon. Member.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, has received a small number of letters commenting on the recent appointments. Members are appointed for the personal contribution that they can bring to the work of the council.

Countryside (Access)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those individual and organisations who have been lobbying him and other Ministers in his Department about common land footpaths, and access to the countryside during the last two months.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A large number of representations have been received during the last two months, covering a wide range of views on access issues. They have arisen primarily from the Ramblers' Association's footpaths appeal, the Countryside Commission's "Enjoying the Countryside" initiative, the Government's proposals for privatising the water industry and for legislation in the Rubinstein case, and the question of future access to upland commons. Also, on 7 June, I met the hon. Member for a useful discussion of current concerns on these matters.

Pollution (North Sea)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies the North sea task force is undertaking to evaluate the impact of pollutants on marine mammals and seabirds; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The role of the North sea task force is principally to co-ordinate and assess the marine environmental research and monitoring carried out by member states and to identify gaps in knowledge. It is for member states to give effect to task force priorities and objectives and in the United Kingdom, this falls to the research programmes of relevant Departments, and other agencies such as the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) and universities. In the case of marine mammals, studies are currently under way sponsored by the Department of the Environment, with assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, on the impact of contaminants on seals. Similar work on cetaceans is under consideration and studies of contaminant effects on sea birds are carried out by NERC and sponsored by NCC.

Rhinoceros and Ivory Products

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many licences have been issued under the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild flora and fauna for the importation of rhinoceros products for each of the last five years for which records are available;

(2) how many licences have been issued under the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild flora and fauna for the importation of ivory or ivory products for each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Drinking Water

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of which standards set in the European Community drinking water directive are regularly exceeded by water suppliers in England which have not been granted derogations.

Mr. Howard: The standard for nitrates in the EC drinking water directive is regularly exceeded in some water supplies in England. Remedial programmes are in hand to ensure compliance as quickly as possible taking account of practicalities.

The pesticides standard in the EC directive is also exceeded in some water supplies. Current medical advice is that pesticide levels detected do not constitute a risk to health.

Rose Theatre

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what sums in archaeological fees have been received by the museum of London for work done at the site of the Rose theatre.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* The fees paid to the Museum of London for work on the Rose theatre are a matter for English Heritage and Imry Merchant Developers plc.

British Steel, Redcar

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on dust emissions from British Steel, Redcar.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* Control of emissions to atmosphere from British Steel, Redcar including dust are the responsibility of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. Standards are set and are currently being met. There have been a number of complaints about dust arising from stockpiles particularly in high wind conditions. Work is in hand to minimise such occurrences.

Sewage Discharges (North-West)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the precise locations of each application made for derogation of sewage discharges in the north-west; if he will list also any other derogation currently in force in the north-west; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will state for each sewage derogation site currently approved or under consideration by his Department in the north-west *(a)* what improvement programmes for effluent at each location has been submitted, *(b)* what are the commencement and finishing dates for such improvement programmes and *(c)* what are the target levels for achievement of the improvement of effluent at the point of discharge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* I announced on 7 December 1988 at column *199*, an accelerated capital investment programme of about £1 billion to bring sub-standard sewage treatment works into compliance with their discharge consents. Water authorities may apply for time-limited discharge consents to regularise the present discharge whilst these improvements are carried out.

A list of the applications made for time-limited consents where improvements are planned has been placed in the Library. Details of these applications are on the register maintained by each water authority and are available for public inspection. The applications have also been advertised by the authorities concerned.

In some cases improvements have already commenced and in others will commence shortly. In general, I expect the improvements to be completed, by March 1992, but in some cases because of the scale of design and construction work which is necessary, works will be completed as soon as practically possible thereafter.

The time-limited consents will not permit deterioration in the current performance of these works and consent conditions no less stringent than those which currently apply will be reintroduced once the work is complete. The programme is expected to produce significant improvements in river quality both in the north-west and more generally.

Details of all discharge consents, including any derogations currently in force, are available on the authority's public register.

Property Revaluation

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 26 June, *Official Report*, column *347*, he will state *(a)* whether draft valuation lists deposited with charging authorities will be open to public inspection, and *(b)* what steps he will take to advise non-domestic ratepayers to ascertain the proposed new rateable values of their property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The draft rating lists which the valuation office is to deposit with charging authorities will be open to public inspection. Non-domestic ratepayers might be well advised to check their proposed rateable values, though they should of course bear in mind that their 1990-91 rate bill will also be affected by the introduction of a uniform poundage and, in many cases, by the transitional arrangements for phasing in the new system.

Community Charge

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the estimated community charge, assuming the grant regime and expenditure current at the time, payable in each of the Somerset districts for the financial years 1988-89 and 1989-90; and what estimate he has for 1990-91 assuming no changes in grant regime or spending plans.

Mr. Gummer: Illustrative 1988-89 community charges were placed in the Library on 23 June 1988. These assumed that the total grant available was the same as with rates. Illustrative 1989-90 figures will be published in due course. The 1988-89 community charges, disregarding the effects of the transitional safety nets, are as follows:

	£
Mendip	209
Sedgemoor	222
Taunton Deane	211
West Somerset	214
South Somerset	214

NORTHERN IRELAND

NIE (Privatisation)

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to appoint consultants to advise on the privatisation of the Northern Ireland Electricity.

Mr. Viggers: Steps are being taken at present to recruit a financial adviser. Consultants in other disciplines will be appointed as they are required.

Payments for Debt

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the total deductions made from *(a)* invalidity benefit, *(b)* child benefit, *(c)* widow's benefit, *(d)* supplementary benefit, *(e)* unemployment benefit, *(f)* sickness benefit and *(g)* retirement pensions in each year from 1979 to 1989 under the Payment for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1971.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 20 June 1989]:* The information requested for the year 1989-90 is estimated as follows:

Financial year 1989-90	*£'s*
Income support	245,280·97
Child benefit	6,773·19
Unemployment benefit	6,553·67

Financial year 1989-90	*£'s*
Sickness benefit	991·33
Invalidity benefit	46,862·64
Retirement benefit	29,805·48
Widow's benefit	14,660·93
Severe disablement allowance (effective from April 1988)	94·47

For earlier years I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 25 October 1988 at column *137*.

The figures are not however directly comparable with the earlier figures because the effect from April 1988 the major proportion of deductions from benefits against arrears of rent, rates, electricity and gas charges are made under the provisions of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations (NI) 1987. The figures relate only to deductions, which have been made in 1988-89 under the Payment for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (NI) 1971. The interim information given for 1988-89 in the answer on 25 October 1988 was compiled on the basis used in the years up to and including 1987-88 as the data had not at that stage been refined.

SCOTLAND

Timber

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he can give details of the total value of Scottish timber sold in the last five years; and what was the value of timber products sold to English-based customers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The total value, delivered at mill, of the timber harvested from Scottish forests during the five years to 31 March 1988 is estimated to be over £300 million at current prices. Some of this will have been delivered to English mills.

It is estimated that over the same period Scottish manufacturers sold timber products worth about £7,000 million at current prices, made from both home-grown and imported timber. It is not known how much of this was sold to English-based customers.

EDRP Inquiry

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will make a statement on the outcome of the European demonstration reprocessing plant inquiry.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend is still considering the report of the public local inquiry into the proposed development and he is not yet in a position to predict a date for the announcement of his decision.

Health Boards

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how much money the Scottish Home and Health Department indicated it expected each health board to commit to support finance purposes in each year since 1985-86;

(2) how much was spent by each Scottish health board for support finance purposes in each year since 1985-86.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is given in the table:

£ million

Board	*1985-86*		*1986-87*		*1987-88*		*1988-89*	*1988-89*
	Indicative level	*Payments*	*Indicative level*	*Payments*	*Indicative level*	*Payments*	*Indicative level*	*Payments (provisional)*
Argyll and Clyde	0·273	0·004	0·284	0·058	0·295	0·035	0·308	0·085
Ayrshire and Arran	0·227	0·025	0·237	0·047	0·246	0·142	0·257	0·315
Borders	0·154	0·273	0·190	0·097	0·153	0·103	0·149	0·085
Dumfries and Galloway	0·531	0·469	0·354	0·283	0·214	0·112	0·180	0·168
Fife	0·540	0·379	0·331	0·218	0·301	0·410	0·285	0·534
Forth Valley	0·404	0·192	0·473	0·347	0·421	0·251	0·221	0·259
Grampian	0·507	0·271	0·522	0·408	0·621	0·601	0·511	0·652
Greater Glasgow	0·795	0·010	0·832	0·473	0·873	0·431	0·897	1·224
Highland	1·094	0·626	1·341	1·222	0·626	0·517	0·510	0·379
Lanarkshire	0·437	0·126	0·440	0·117	0·424	0·145	0·402	0·120
Lothian	0·533	0·108	0·481	0·539	0·486	0·707	0·509	0·651
Orkney	0·015	0·025	0·015	0·015	0·015	0·011	0·015	0·019
Shetland	0·015	—	0·016	0·016	0·017	0·016	0·017	0·017
Tayside	0·313	0·154	0·396	0·235	0·368	0·114	0·361	0·337
Western Isles	0·176	0·192	0·183	0·150	0·148	0·140	0·103	0·075
TOTAL	6·014	2·854	6·095	4·225	5·208	3·735	4·725	4·920

General Practitioners (Disciplinary Measures)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the details of Scottish general practitioners who, in the last 10 years, have been in breach of their services and conditions and who have been subjected to disciplinary measures; and if he will list where they were in practice at the time and where they are in practice today.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 19 June 1989]:* Complaints about practitioners who are in contract with health boards to provide general medical or dental services are dealt with through the service committee procedures set out in the National Health Service (Service Committee and Tribunal) (Scotland) Regulations 1974. Service committee procedures are not disciplinary measures as such, but provide for the investigation of complaints that practitioners may have breached the terms of service of their contract. These complaints cover a wide variety of cases, ranging from breaches which are of a minor or vicarious nature to significant failures by practitioners to comply with their terms of service.

Since 1 January 1979, 98 general medical practitioners and 65 general dental practitioners in Scotland have been found to be in breach of their terms of service under the service committee procedures.

It is not the normal practice to publish information about individual cases.

Public Transport Accidents

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of notified accidents in each mode of public transport for each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 13 June 1989]:* The available information on notified accidents is given in the following table. Casualty figures are also provided. The definitions of notified accidents differ by mode of transport, and footnotes describe the coverage.

	Bus/coach	Taxi	Rail	Glasgow Underground	Ferry services	Air
(a) Number of accidents						
1984	1,565	627	59	n/a	37	7
1985	1,667	614	72	n/a	43	4
1986	1,508	711	53	49	33	7
1987	1,506	674	76	55	42	6
1988	1,624	670	104	52	24	3
(b) Number of casualties						
1984	2,047	833	111	n/a	37	1
1985	2,274	797	69	n/a	43	0
1986	2,065	922	54	49	33	64
1987	2,047	858	40	55	42	0
1988	2,119	930	23	52	24	270

Notes:

Casualties: Include all fatal, serious and slight injury casualties.

Bus and Taxi: Only injury accidents are notified centrally. Casualty numbers include casualties in other vehicles and pedestrians.

Rail: Includes both passenger and normal freight services and covers all notified accidents, including non-injury accidents. 1984 includes the Polmont disaster.

Glasgow Underground: Includes all accidents on the premises as well as trains.

Air: All notified accidents over Scottish airspace and includes operations to gas and oil installations. 1986 includes the Chinook helicopter disaster and 1988 the Lockerbie air disaster.

Contracts (Tendering)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how the costs of preparing an in-house bid for multi-service contracts either wholly or individually, within the health boards in Scotland, are assessed; and what advantage these in-house tenders have over that of a private contractor bidding for the same contract.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* No assessment of the cost of preparing an in-house bid is made for the purposes of comparing tenders which, whether in or out-house, are treated on an equal footing.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions an in-house tender has been awarded by health boards in Scotland for catering contracts where a private contractor submitted a lower tender; if he approved this action; if he will call upon the appropriate health board to reconsider its decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* Boards have reported two cases of a catering contract being awarded to an in-house team where a private contractor has submitted a lower bid. Boards report the circumstances of such an award, but there is no requirement for boards to seek the approval of the Secretary of State for such an action and no health board has been asked to reconsider its decison.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he proposes to take to draw the attention of health boards to Government policy on competitive tendering.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* Boards are already well aware of the Government's policy on competitive tendering and I do not propose to issue any additional advice at this time.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from private contractors regarding the award of multi-service contracts, either as a whole, or in part, within the National Health Service in Scotland; and what was his response.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* None.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what system operates in his Department to monitor in-house contracts which have been awarded within the National Health boards in Scotland, to ensure that the operations carried out are up to the prescribed conditions in the tender documents; and if he will make a statement,

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* It is for health boards to monitor standards of performance in respect of contracts whether in or out-house.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensioners

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total expenditure on community care grants for pensioners in the year 1988-89; and what was the average amount received by way of community care grant by each pensioner in receipt of income support.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Total community care grant expenditure on pensioners in 1988-89 was provisonally £7·217 million. The average size of award was £212.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total expenditure on single payments for pensioners in the year 1987-88; and what was the average amount received by way of single payments by each pensioner in receipt of supplementary benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Total single payment expenditure on pensioners in 1987-88 was £26 million. The average size of award was £62.

Income Support

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what basis the personal allowance and premium rates in the income support applicable amounts are calculated.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As a first step in setting the benefit levels, illustrative rates were constructed which delivered roughly the same amounts of money to various types of

claimants as they had been receiving under supplementary benefit. These were then adjusted up or down and the effects on claimants were studied using a computer model. The outcome of this process was the illustrative rates given in the technical annex to the 1985 White Paper. The personal allowance and premium rates for income support, on its introduction in April 1988, were obtained by a similar process using the latest statistics on numbers of beneficiaries and with adjustments to provide help towards the requirement to make a minimum contribution to domestic rates. Further adjustments have been made as part of this year's uprating.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he added a phrase to the Department of Social Security notification of award form which states that the applicable amount is the total amount that the law says you need to live on.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The current wording on the notice of assessment (form A14N), which advises claimants how their income support is calculated, dates from the introduction of income support in April 1988.

Widow's Benefit

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will investigate the case of Mrs. Christine Noden, JP, of 9 Wood crescent, Walton Stone, Staffordshire, and her entitlement to widow's benefit and request the relevant office in his Department to send forthwith a substantive reply following their last letter to her of 13 March.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Arrears of widow's benefit from 10 May 1988 and an explanatory letter were sent to Mrs. Noden on 30 June 1989.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in the Doncaster and Mexborough area of South Yorkshire receive severe disablement allowance; and what are the comparable figures for *(a)* five years ago and *(b)* 10 years ago.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available in the precise form requested. Severe disablement allowance was introduced in November 1984 and figures for five and 10 years ago are not held.

The table shows, at the latest date available, the numbers of severe disablement allowance claimants at the Department's local social security offices at Doncaster, East, Doncaster, West and Mexborough which serve the Don Valley constituency, although their boundaries are not conterminous.

Date	*Doncaster East*	*Doncaster West*	*Mexborough*
31 May 1989	721	909	233

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action. The figures quoted may include a small number of cases not actually in receipt of benefit. Data are provisional and subject to amendment.

Community Care Grants

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing how much expenditure was allocated for community care grants in each local office in *(a)* 1988-89 and *(b)* 1989-90; and how much each local office over or underspent its budget for community care grants in 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is available in the Library.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will introduce regulations to give immediate entitlement to the severe disability premium to people claiming income support whose doctor certifies that they have a medical condition which is terminal or which will last at least six months and which gives rise to substantial identifiable extra costs; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will introduce regulations to give immediate entitlement to the disability premium to people claiming income support whose doctor certifies that they have a medical condition which is terminal or which will last at least six months and which gives rise to significant identifiable extra costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We are considering what action we might take to provide help for terminally ill people through an amendment of the rules governing the award of attendance allowance.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how he proposes to seek the views of disabled people in his forthcoming review of their benefits; when he expects to decide the terms of reference for that review; and whether he intends to appoint independent experts.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 3 July at column 7.

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will bring forward legislation to ensure that a spouse remaining at home can continue to have a share of the occupational pension of someone admitted to permanent residential or nursing home care who is in receipt of income support.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. An individual who enters permanent residential or nursing home care remains entitled to an occupational pension. Whether part of a member's pension may be commuted to provide pension for a spouse is a matter for determination in accordance with the rules of the scheme.

Private Nursing Care (Claimants)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, in view of the concern regarding the handling of residents' moneys by proprietors or staff in private residential or nursing homes, he will review his policy of not making income support payments direct to claimants' bank accounts.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The facility to have benefit paid directly into a bank account is restricted to beneficiaries paid by computer because a transfer of magnetic tapes is required to effect the payment to the bank. Income support is paid clerically in local social security offices and the direct payment facility cannot be made available at present.

However, it is anticipated that payment of income support will be computerised by the early 1990s and direct payment to bank accounts will then be offered as an option.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what advice his Department offers to income support claimants who are admitted temporarily to private residential or nursing care in meeting their liability for rates and other charges on their own homes when their personal expenses allowance is used up on meeting their residential costs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Income support is available to help temporary and permanent residents of residential care and nursing homes meet the fees. People in homes temporarily can continue to receive housing benefit in respect of their own homes or can claim help with certain other housing costs such as mortgage interest, ground rent and service charges.

Mr. David Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy regarding the handling of claims for income support from residents of private residential or nursing care where they are required to contribute non-returnable deposits, payments of one month's fees in advance or payments in advance of funeral costs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Income support is available to help people in independent residential care homes and nursing homes meet the fees they have to pay on a weekly basis. However, the terms on which people enter homes are a matter between themselves and the home's proprietors.

Benefit is not paid until the claimant is resident in the home but claims for help with fees can be made up to one month in advance. Income support is not available to meet deposits or funeral costs.

Social fund funeral payments are available subject to a capital limit, to people who are responsible, for the cost of a funeral and who are receiving income support, family credit, housing benefit or community charge rebate at the time of claim. They cannot be paid in advance.

Mr. David Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy regarding the realisation of the sale of the former home of an applicant for income support in private residential care where such a sale would render the resident's previous carer homeless.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Owners of property should be able to receive the full benefit of the capital invested in their former homes before looking to public funds for their support. However, claimants for income support are not required to realise that property when it is occupied by a partner, or by a relative who is aged 60 or over or is incapacitated. Carers who occupy the claimant's former home in any of these circumstances will gain from these concessions. We are continuing to monitor the effects of this policy.

Mr. David Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) whether the nearest relatives of income support claimants in private residential or nursing care can refuse requests to top up the claimants' fees for care where the claimants' total income does not meet the full costs of care provided;

(2) which agency is responsible for meeting the difference between the fees for private residential and nursing care and the total income of an income support claimant when their resources fall short of the costs of residence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Income support is available to help people in independent homes meet the fees. The level of fees charged in private homes and the way fees are paid are matters wholly between proprietors and residents, or people acting on residents' behalf. Local authorities can meet a shortfall where people under pension age are in residential care homes, and local and health authorities can meet the full cost of care in certain circumstances.

Personal Pensions

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people had taken out a personal pension up to 5 April; and how many have done so subsequently.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Almost 3·4 million people took out a personal pension before the end of 1988-89 tax year, and about 17,000 have done so subsequently.

National Insurance

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the most recent estimate of the cost to the national insurance fund of the 2 per cent. inducement under sections 1 and 7, respectively, of the Social Security Act 1986 in 1989-90; and how much of the cost relates to contributions in respect of 1987-88 and 1988-89, respectively.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Precise information is not yet available on the number of persons who will be eligible for incentive payments in 1989-90. The latest estimate is that incentive payments paid in 1989-90 will be £920 million, of which £370 million relates to 1987-88 and £550 million to 1988-89.

Source: Government Actuary's Department.

Agency Status

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will publish details of the surveys carried out prior to the publication of the report which proposed agency status for much of his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There were no surveys carried out specifically in relation to the production of the agency study report. The study team which produced the report did, however, draw on existing survey material and numerous other sources. The methodology of the team is listed in annex B of the report which is available in the Library.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to introduce the over-18 rate of housing benefit for under-18s; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 10 July 1989.

Benefits

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a revised version of the table in leaflet AB11 of net incomes

qualifying for help with National Health Service costs, including examples of persons receiving attendance allowance, mobility allowance, or invalidity benefit; and whether he will insert a correction slip in leaflet AB11 giving similar examples.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 12 June 1989]:* A revised version of the table would be as follows:

Single people without children

	£	*If receiving attendance allowance, mobility allowance or invalidity benefit* £
Under 18	20·80	34·50
18 to 24	27·40	41·10
25 and over	34·90	48·60
60 to 79	46·10	48·60
80 and over	48·60	48·60

Couples without children

	£	*If one of the couple is receiving one of the above benefits* £
Both under 18	41·60	61·10
At least one of the couple 18 or over	54·80	74·30
At least one of the couple aged 60 to 79	71·85	74·30
At least one over age 80	74·30	74·30

Lone parents

	£	*If the parent is receiving one of the above benefits* £
Under 18	31·20	41·00
18 and over	45·30	55·10

Couples with children

	£	*If one of the couple is receiving one of the above benefits* £
Both under 18	48·10	67·60
At least one of the couple 18 or over	61·30	80·80

Children

	£
To the amount shown above that applies to you, add one of the following amounts for each additional child in your family:	
Under 11	11·75
11 to 15	17·35
16 to 17, doing a full-time further education course not above A-level or equivalent standard	20·80
18 and over, doing a full-time further education course not above A-level or equivalent standard	27·40

Add a further £6·50 for any child who is getting attendance allowance or mobility allowance.

Such a table would still not cover people who qualify for a disability premium on other grounds, nor reflect that some people receiving attendance allowance may qualify for the severe disability premium. The Department is considering, with the Department of Health, how best to clarify the position for all those who may be affected, in the light of the effect on the existing table of forthcoming changes in the income support pensioner premiums.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what benefits are covered by the payment of national insurance contributions; what percentage of the total sum is each one, assuming the person is on average weekly wage; and what percentage of each benefit is covered by taxation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 13 June 1989]:* National insurance contributions, less the allocation to the National Health Service, are paid into the national insurance fund, which pays for all contributory benefits. These include: retirement pension including the Christmas bonus and the earnings-related additional component, widow's benefits and industrial injuries benefits. National insurance contribution rates are fixed each year to balance very broadly contributions into and benefit expenditure out of the fund; they are not fixed by adding up components relevant to the cost of each benefit. Assuming the abolition of the Treasury supplement from April 1989 the fund will receive no income from taxation. Entitlement to the state earnings-related part of the retirement pension is fixed by reference to the movement of earnings since the year in which the relevant contributions were made.

In 1989-90 the share of breakdown of contributory benefit expenditure, and the remaining information is expected to be as follows:

Breakdown of Contributory Benefit Expenditure

	£ billion	Percentage share	*Breakdown of net contributions[3] (per week)* Pre-October 1989 £	Post-October 1989 £
Retirement pensions[1]	20,766	73·2	16·00	14·13
Widow's Benefits	930	3·3	0·72	0·64
Unemployment, incapacity and other benefits	5,160	18·2	3·98	3·51
Other[2]	566	2·0	0·44	0·39
Administration	960	3·4	0·74	0·66
TOTAL	28,382	100	21·87	19·33

[1] Including Christmas bonus and earnings-related benefits.
[2] Including Industrial Injuries benefits and Maternity Allowance.
[3] A man on average male earnings is assumed to earn £275·10 a week in 1989-90. On the basis of the current NIC system in force until October 1989 he will pay £24·76 a week if he is not contracted-out of the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme (SERPS). £2·89 of the £24·76 is allocated

to the National Health Service, giving a net contribution to the National Insurance Fund of £21·87 a week. Under the system that will operate from October 1989 the not contracted out contribution will be £21·75 of which £2·44 will be allocated to the NHS leaving a net contribution of £19·31 to the Fund. These net figures are further broken down by reference to the percentage shares quoted in the table. (Components do not add to the totals because of rounding).

Disability

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table equivalent to table 2.15 of the second report of the surveys of disability in Great Britain by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys indicating the working status of disabled adults under pension age in each English region, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 14 June 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

Working status of adults under pension age by sex and region: Disabled adults and general population

Percentage

	Proportion of adults under pension age who are working					
	Disabled adults			*General population*		
	Men	*Women*	*All*	*Men*	*Women*	*All*
North	20	21	21	68	52	60
Yorkshire and Humberside	29	25	28	76	57	66
North West	28	32	30	72	53	62
East Midlands	44	31	38	81	63	72
West Midlands	28	28	28	73	54	64
East Anglia	52	29	42	86	64	75
Greater London	42	38	40	82	63	73
South East[1]	46	38	42	87	63	75
South West	38	27	34	86	59	73
Wales	24	17	21	75	57	66
Scotland	25	20	23	77	59	68

[1] Except Greater London.

Source: Disabled adults—OPCS Survey of Disability (data collected in 1985).
General Population—1985 Family Expenditure Survey.

Notes:

1. The data are obtained from sample surveys and are subject to sampling error. Sampling errors on results broken down by regions are considerably larger than those in the original, national table. (Table 2.15 in the second report of the OPCS surveys of disability: "The financial circumstances of disabled adults living in private households").
2. Further breakdown of the data shown in the table is not possible: sample numbers are too smal for the figures to be statistically reliable.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table equivalent to table 5.4 of the second report of the surveys of disability in Great Britain by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, indicating the average equivalent resources of disabled adults compared with the average equivalent income of the general population in each English region, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 14 June 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

Average equivalent resources of disabled adults compared with average equivalent income of the general population, by region (£ per week)

	Disabled Adults			*General Population*		
	Non pensioner family units	*Pensioner family units*	*All family units*	*Non pensioner family units*	*Pensioner family units*	*All family units*
	(Average Equivalent Resources)			*(Average Equivalent Income)*		
North	97·40	79·00	87·30	118·10	88·00	110·70
Yorkshire and Humberside	87·30	77·60	81·50	121·10	95·30	113·70
North West	84·50	80·20	81·80	122·40	83·20	113·40
East Midlands	91·00	77·60	82·90	130·60	94·00	121·30
West Midlands	83·60	88·20	86·30	124·20	83·30	114·50
East Anglia	89·60	78·20	82·00	144·90	92·10	131·50
Greater London	100·00	88·80	92·60	165·80	96·40	149·20
South East[1]	99·50	85·20	90·10	152·10	107·60	141·70
South West	102·20	90·60	94·60	140·20	87·80	126·50
Wales	88·60	83·40	85·50	136·70	107·00	128·30
Scotland	84·70	83·40	84·00	134·50	90·60	124·00

[1] Except Greater London.

Sources:
Disabled adults — OPCS Survey of Disability (data collected in 1985).
General population — 1985 Family Expenditure Survey.

Notes:

1. The data are obtained from sample surveys and are subject to sampling error. Sampling errors on results broken down by regions are considerably larger than those in the original, national table. (Table 5.4 in the second report of the OPCS surveys of disability: "The financial circumstances of disabled adults living in private households").
2. Further breakdown of the data shown in the table is not possible: sample numbers are too small for the figures to be statistically reliable.

HEALTH

Medical Staff (Pay)

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the percentage increase in average earnings since May 1979, to the latest date for which figures are available of *(a)* doctors, *(b)* nurses, and *(c)* medical scientific officers.

Mr. Mellor: The following is the information:

Average earnings

	Medical Practitioners	*Nurses and Midwives*
Percentage increase April 1980—April 1988	211·2	195·0

Notes:

1. *Source*: New Earnings Survey 1988.
2. Directly comparable data is not available for National Health Service scientific officers.
3. Earnings are for employees on adult rates of pay whose pay was not affected by absence.
4. The figures do not include increases paid from 1 April 1988.
5. Medical practitioners include hospital medical staff, consultants and community physicians as well as general practitioners.
6. Nurses and midwives figure is based on earnings of female staff (currently 90 per cent. of nurses).

Wheelchairs

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy that in the event of a successful pilot study he will make additional money available to the Disablement Services Authority for the provision of battery powered indoor-outdoor wheelchairs.

Mr. Mellor: The Disablement Services Authority is financing the present pilot study from within its present resources. If the authority concludes that additional resources are needed it will no doubt justify such a request to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State which will be considered in the public expenditure survey process.

Elderly People

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration he is giving to alternative uses of available resources to fund care for frail, elderly people.

Mr. Mellor: We have already published our proposals for the organisation of health services in the White Paper "Working for Patients". The pattern of care for frail elderly people will evolve over the next few years as these proposals are implemented. We will announce our proposals for future policies on community care, following Sir Roy Griffiths' report "Community Care—An Agenda for Action" before the recess.

Live Births (Hemel Hempstead)

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of live births in St. Paul's hospital, Hemel Hempstead, in each of the last four calendar years.

Mr. Freeman: The available information is given in the table. 1986 is the latest year for which information is available centrally.

Live births occurring at St. Pauls Wing, Hemel Hempstead General Hospital, 1983-86.

Year	*Live births*
1983	1,145
1984	1,080
1985	1,096
1986	1,136

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, further to his reply of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *424*, what is the rationale of replacing chairmen of family practitioner committees who have long service on that committee with chairmen who have no service on that committee.

Mr. Mellor: It has been our policy to recruit a proportion of new chairmen for family practitioner committees at each biennial appointments round. A total of 25 new chairmen were appointed as part of the 1989 round and a further 29 existing chairmen were re-appointed. The two vacancies referred to in my earlier reply have since been filled by Mr. D. Kleeman (Enfield and Haringey) and Mr. L. G. Knox (Redbridge and Waltham Forest) who are lay persons new to service in FPCs. The 36 other chairmanships had previously been made for a period—in most cases of four years—ending on 31 March 1991. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on a decision relating to a particular chairmanship.

Death Statistics

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of British people who die each year from infectious diseases; and what are the Government's plans to reduce that number.

Mr. Freeman: The provisional figure for the number of people who died from infectious diseases in 1988 is 2,733.

The Government are pursuing a number of measures to reduce this rate of mortality and, in particular, are taking action to ensure that immunisation uptake rates increase.

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of British people who die each year from food poisoning; and what are the Government's plans to reduce that number.

Mr. Freeman: The provisional estimate for the number of deaths in 1988 associated with food poisoning is 62. The Government's commitment to a comprehensive range of measures on food safety was made again in the Opposition day debate on 21 June at columns 342-90.

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of British people who die each year from sexually related diseases; and what are the Government's plans to reduce that number.

Mr. Freeman: The provisional estimate of the number of people who died from sexually related diseases (excluding AIDS) in 1988 is 32.

To improve the treatment and prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases the Government have made available extra resources for the upgrading of genito-urinary clinics.

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of British people who die each year from smoking-related diseases; and what are the Government's plans to reduce that number.

Mr. Mellor: It is estimated that at least 110,000 people died from smoking-related diseases in Great Britain in 1987. The Government's health education programme is designed to inform people about the risks of smoking and to encourage them to give up the habit. The system of voluntary agreements with the tobacco industry provides controls over the advertising and promotion of cigarettes and has resulted in a reduction of average cigarette tar yields from 21mg in 1972 to 13mg now. In January of this year the Prime Minister announced a major new teenage smoking campaign, aimed specifically at teenagers, which will cost over £2 million per year for the next three years.

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of British people who die each year from alcohol-related diseases; and what are the Government's plans to reduce that number.

Mr. Freeman: The provisional figure for deaths where the underlying cause was alcohol dependence, non-dependent abuse of alcohol, chronic liver disease and cirrhosis and toxic effect of alcohol for 1988 in England, Wales and Scotland is 3,933.

Government action to tackle health and social alcohol-related harm is co-ordinated by the ministerial group on alcohol misuse. Action taken by the group is set out in its first annual report, copies of which are available in the Library.

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of British people who die each year from heart diseases; and what are the Government's plans to reduce that number.

Mr. Freeman: The latest provisional figure for 1988 for the number of people who died from heart disease in Great Britain is 202,000.

The risk of heart disease can be lessened by changes in lifestyle. Together with the Health Education Authority, the Department is supporting and developing the "Look After Your Heart" campaign as an ongoing initiative to combat the high level of heart disease in England. "Look After Your Heart" has two main aims—to increase awareness about the risk of heart disease and to encourage people to avoid it; and to provide practical help with regard to a healthy diet, stopping smoking, taking more exercise and making other changes to the way they live.

Much other work is going on, particularly to discourage smoking—which is a key factor in causing heart disease—and excessive consumption of alcohol. Under changes to general practitioners' terms of service, they will be required to offer patients regular check-ups and personal advice on health issues, including those directly related to heart disease.

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of British people who die each year from drugs and from drug-related diseases; and what are the Government's plans to reduce that number.

Mr. Freeman: The provisional figure for deaths where the underlying cause was drug dependence and non-dependent abuse of drugs is 221 for 1988 in England, Wales and Scotland. The Government are actively pursuing a wide-ranging strategy to reduce the supply of and the demand for drugs.

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of British people who die each year from cancer; and what are the Government's plans to reduce that number.

Mr. Freeman: Cancer was registered as the primary cause of death of 160,661 people in the United Kingdom in 1987. The incidence of cancer increases with age, and the death rate tends to reflect the increasing age of the population. The goal of the Europe Against Cancer programme, which the Government are supporting, is to reduce the number of cancer deaths in the Community projected for the year 2000 by 15 per cent. This is being taken forward through programmes of public and professional information on prevention and detection, the evaluation and implementation of screening techniques, and through the co-ordination of research into the causes and treatment of cancer. It is also important to acknowledge the progress made by the Health Service and voluntary organisations in lengthening the survival and improving the care and support of people who eventually die from cancer. The Government will continue to encourage them to achieve the highest possible standards in this field.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any proposals to enable district health authorities or local authorities to top up the financial contributions that residents in private residential or nursing care pay towards the costs of their care where the residents concerned have entered private care because the authorities cannot provide such care.

Mr. Mellor: In his report on community care, Sir Roy Griffiths made recommendations for the future funding of patients in private nursing and residential care homes. We are considering these and will bring forward our proposals before the summer recess.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce provisions for a right to stay in private residential or nursing home care for residents whose financial resources are no longer sufficient to meet their residential fees.

Mr. Mellor: No. The arrangements for people living in a private residential care or nursing home are for the proprietor and the individual concerned. Statutory services remain as an alternative source of care.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will take action to deal with the practice of private residential and nursing homes charging for extras over and above their quoted fees and imposing such charges after people have been in residence for a considerable time;

(2) what is his policy on allowing private residential and nursing homes to obtain medical requisites from the National Health Service and selling them to residents at a profit.

Mr. Freeman: The level of fees in private nursing or residential care homes is a matter for the proprietor and

the patient and not something on which we would wish to intervene. However we would expect the fees to cover all necessary services, including medical requisites. It makes sense for proprietors to buy requisites at the best possible price and for the patient to share in any consequent savings.

Mr. David Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action he is taking to ensure that the full hospital discharge procedure, outlined in his Department's draft circular issued during early 1988, is followed when hospitals are discharging patients into private residential or nursing homes;

(2) what guidance his Department offers to authorities in relation to patients discharged from hospitals whose only option on discharge is to enter private residential or nursing care which they cannot afford;

(3) what rights an individual patient who is being discharged from hospital care has to dispute his allocation to private residential or nursing care;

(4) who is responsible for arranging the care of a patient whom a hospital consultant states must be discharged but needs continuing 24-hour care.

Mr. Freeman: Circular HC(89)5 which was issued to health authorities in February 1989, together with a booklet "Discharge of Patients from Hospital" emphasised that proper arrangements should be made for any necessary continuing care before patients are discharged from hospital. Arrangements, including care in a private residential or nursing home, should be made in good time and be acceptable to the patient and his/her relatives or carers. No NHS patient should be placed in a private nursing or residential care home against his/her wishes if it means that she or he will be personally responsible for the home's charges. Future responsibility for care will be a matter for local arrangement.

Eye Tests

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information he has on the percentage fall in the number of people having eye tests since charges for tests were introduced in April;

(2) what is the average amount that opticians now charge for eye tests; and what information he has on the number of optometrists who absorb the cost in their charges for treatment.

Mr. Mellor: We do not yet have information either on the number of people having sight tests or on the current level of charges. We expect to have some information later in the year when the market is more stable.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost to date of advertisements to encourage people to have eye tests; whether he has any plans to redirect future advertising costs to the reduction in cost to patients of eye tests; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We agreed early last year to participate with the optical profession in an eye care awareness campaign and we contributed £0·25 million. There is no provision for any funds for further advertising and therefore no re-directing of funds can be considered.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the difference in cost between a patient being seen in hospital as an outpatient, and being seen by an optometrist, for eye tests.

Mr. Mellor: A fee of £10·40 is paid to ophthalmic opticians and £8·69 to ophthalmic medical practitioners for an NHS sight test. We do not collect figures centrally for sight tests undertaken as part of treatment in NHS hospitals.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what savings have resulted from the introduction of eye test charges;

(2) whether the introduction of eye tests has resulted in a saving to public funds.

Mr. Mellor: We estimate that the introduction of sight test charges will result in a saving of some £70 million this financial year.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether there has been an increase in the number of patients referred to hospital ophthalmology departments for eye tests since the introduction of charges for eye tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We do not yet have this information centrally.

Food Safety

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the consistency of health checks in respect of food and food products in each member state of the European Community; and what steps he will take to ensure that the public of the United Kingdom is protected during the approach to the integrated single European market and after its completion.

Mr. Freeman: The Government are wholly supportive of the need for a European-wide food safety policy. We have been a party to the agreement on five "framework" directives on food labelling, additives, food for particular nutritional use, materials and articles in contact with food and official inspection. This last is very relevant because it will require food for export to another member state to be inspected in the same way as food intended for consumption within the member state. More importantly, it will be backed by a proposed directive on food hygiene with the aim of harmonising standards. Even with completion of the single market, the United Kingdom will be able to take action on the ground of public health either under article 36 of the treaty of Rome or guarantees provided under the relevant directive.

Aside from legislation, the Government participate in a number of Europe-wide committees and working groups established to deal with specific food safety issues.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make it his policy that controls over food for human consumption should continue to come under the care of environmental health officers; and whether he will press the European Community to recognise this approach.

Mr. Freeman: Environmental health officers, trading standards officers, veterinary officers and meat inspectors all enforce controls over food for human consumption. Within the European Community the British Government are continuing to make representation when appropriate.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will press for the incorporation into European

Community directives and regulations of recognition that the work of environmental health officers in the United Kingdon is geared towards food safety and food hygiene.

Mr. Freeman: Apart from veterinary directives, community legislation to date has not specified the professionals required to enforce EC directives.

Embryo Experimentation

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish the Bill on embryo experimentation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: It remains our intention to introduce legislation on human fertilisation and embryology during this Parliament. There will be a free vote on alternative draft clauses on human embryo research, one banning such research completely, the other permitting it under strict controls.

Project 2000

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to change the grants system for student nurses under Project 2000 into a top-up loans scheme, should the latter proceed for students in higher education.

Mr. Mellor: Bursary levels for Project 2000 students will be kept under review in the light of recruitment and retention trends and future changes in student income support arrangements, including loans.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, in relation to the grants system for student nurses under Project 2000, he will list the projected numbers of students, and costs of the grants, with administrative costs itemised separately for each of the first 10 years of operation of the scheme.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available. Thirteen demonstration districts have received approval from the Department to run Project 2000 training from the autumn of 1989. The number of students at any one time, the cost of the grants, and administrative costs will depend on a number of factors including the rate of implementation of Project 2000 in England. No decisions have yet been taken on this.

Health Authority Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each regional health authority, special health authority and district health authority in England for 1987, the numbers of staff in the following groups *(a)* medical and dental, *(b)* nursing and midwifery, *(c)* administrative and clerical, *(d)* ancillary, *(e)* other employees and *(f)* total employees, expressed in terms of (i) the actual number of employees and (ii) wholetime equivalents.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* The information requested has now been placed in the Library.

Pharmaceutical Prices

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether, in view of the publication by the European Bureau of Consumer Unions of comparative drug costs in European Community states, he has anything to add to his answer of 26 January, *Official Report*, column *712*.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* I have nothing of substance to add to my response to the earlier question to which my hon. Friend refers. The latest analysis of prices by the European Bureau of Consumer Unions, which I understand updates the material in an earlier study by the same organisation, is the most recent in a series of such studies by various organisations produced over several years which have generally indicated a similar pattern of overall price differentials for pharmaceutical products in the different member states of the European Community.

Ostomists

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the proposals in the White Paper, "Working for Patients" will result in any disincentive for doctors to have ostomists on their lists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* The scheme will be structured to take full account of the fact that some patients, such as ostomists, may need potentially high cost treatment. Indicative prescribing budgets will fully reflect these costs and there will be no disincentive to GPs to accept such patients on their lists.

Ostomy Appliances

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the proposals in the White Paper, "Working for Patients" will result in any restriction on the provision of ostomy appliances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* No. Decisions about the provision of appliances for ostomy patients will remain a matter for the clinical and professional judgment of the medical and nursing staff working with the patient.

Nurses

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many district appeals against the clinical regrading of nurses had been heard by 30 April; how many were still waiting to be heard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* We do not hold this information centrally.

Birmingham Family Practitioner Committee

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he will list in the *Official Report* the parliamentary constituencies used by the Birmingham family practitioner committee for the purpose of assessing whether there are enough general practitioners in a particular area;

(2) which areas in the city of Birmingham are currently classified as restricted by the medical practices committee.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* The practice area classifications used by the Birmingham family practitioner committee are based on the 1974 parliamentary divisions for the city of Birmingham. These are: Edgbaston, Erdington, Hall Green, Handsworth, Ladywood, Northfield, Perry Barr, Selly Oak, Small Heath, Sparkbrook, Stechford, Sutton Coldfield and Yardley. Of these, Erdington, Small Heath and Yardley are classified as restricted.

Overseas Residents (Medical Records)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the medical records of persons intending to reside overseas for up to a year *(a)* can be transferred to their doctor in the country they are living in temporarily and *(b)* can be made available to the persons concerned for them to pass to their doctor on arrival; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* When people go abroad for more than three months the medical records held by their family doctor are returned to their local family practitioner committee. Most doctors are willing to provide a summary of a patient's relevant medical history for the patient to take to the new doctor overseas. However, they are not required to do this and they may make a charge.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Staff

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many right hon. and hon. Members regularly pay staff via the Fees Office; how many staff employees of Members are paid via the Fees Office; and how many contracts of employment of Members' staff have been lodged with the Fees Office.

Mr. Wakeham: As at 30 June 1989, the figures were 612, 1,287 and 709 respectively.

Members' Cafeteria

Mr. Cox: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make the Members' Cafeteria a non-smoking area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: No. Smoking restrictions have already been introduced in Refreshment Department outlets where they are practicable. It is intended to make further significant improvements in respect of non-smoking areas once the additional facilities in phase I of the new parliamentary buildings are in operation. Until that time the Catering Sub-Committee considers that it would be inappropriate to impose a complete ban on smoking in the Members' Cafeteria and impossible to introduce any non-smoking section within it.

Re-cycled Paper

Mr. Fry: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he has any plans to seek to ensure that all paper used in the House, including stationery available for hon. Members, is made from re-cycled paper.

Mr. Wakeham: Many of the stationery items supplied to the House are already made from re-cycled material. The Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee is fully aware of the need to increase the use of re-cycled paper at every suitable opportunity and has instructed the authorities of the House and HMSO to keep it informed of any significant developments, particularly any that might enable the first-class stationery used by right hon. and hon. Members to be made from re-cycled material.

Clergy (Ordination) Measure

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will authorise the placing in the Vote Office of supporting documents relevant to the Clergy (Ordination) Measure.

Mr. Wakeham: The Vote Office already has copies of those parliamentary documents relevant to this measure and will issue them on demand.

The Library will accept, for reference purposes, other supporting documents which might be considered to be appropriate.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 5 July 1989

DEFENCE

Marconi

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many Marconi or associate company defence contracts are the subject of inquiries by Ministry of Defence police or the special fraud office where charges have not yet been brought;

(2) what inquiries are being undertaken into supply of sonar equipment, radar, J-Tids and the management of Marconi by his Department, including Ministry of Defence police.

Mr. Sainsbury: Inquiries are being made into a number of allegations and it would not be appropriate for me to comment further at this stage; the work of the serious fraud office is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on which contracts between his Department and Marconi or its associate companies moneys have been repaid following upon past costing or inquiries by civil servants.

Mr. Sainsbury: Information relating to the Ministry's dealings with individual companies on post-costing activity or related inquiries is subject to commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the United Kingdom annual defence procurement budget was spent with Marconi and its associate companies in each year since 1986.

Mr. Sainsbury: Payments made to the Marconi Co. Ltd. in respect of headquarters contracts in each of the three years since 1986 represent the following proportions of the United Kingdom annual defence procurement budget:

Year	*Per cent.*
1986-87	7·0
1987-88	7·1
1988-89	5·5

F111 Aircraft

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the safety records of the F111E and the F111A aircraft based at RAF Upper Heyford.

Mr. Neubert: The current safety records of the F111E and the EF111A, to which I assume my hon. Friend refers, are comparable to those of any combat aircraft in the United States air force inventory. There have been no accidents involving EF111A from RAF Upper Heyford and only one accident involving an F111E from RAF Upper Heyford in the 1980s. That was in 1984 when an aircraft suffered a bird strike while on a training flight in Scotland. Both crew members ejected safely.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Fair Trading (Report)

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he intends to publish the report by the Director General of Fair Trading for the year 1988.

Mr. Forth: The 15th annual report by the Director General of Fair Trading has been published today. It covers the period from 1 January 1988 to 31 December 1988. Copies of the report have been laid before Parliament.

Coats Viyella

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what public financial assistance has been paid to Coats Viyella in the United Kingdom in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Information on payments of Government financial assistance to individual companies is commercially confidential except to the extent that it has been published in *British Business* under standing arrangements. The following information has been published in *British Business* on financial assistance to Coats Viyella since it was incorporated in April 1986:

	£
Payments of RDG I	Nil
Payments of RDG II	Nil
Offers of RSA	[1]500,000
Offers of Section 8 assistance	Nil

[1] Published in 1987.

This information relates to Coats Viyella plc: information on assistance paid or offered to its subsidiary companies could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Consumer Credit

Mr. Wood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will make a statement on changes to the regime for regulating consumer credit.

Mr. Maude: I have today signed new regulations relating to consumer credit advertisements and quotations and I have also signed a commencement order under the Consumer Credit Act 1974 relating to the licensing of consumer credit businesses.

The new Consumer Credit (Advertisements) Regulations will come into force on 1 February 1990. The regulations have been substantially simplified. This should be a major benefit to both traders and enforcement bodies. At the same time, additional safeguards for consumers have been provided, including a warning about the risk of loss of the borrower's home in the event of default on a secured loan and about the risks of foreign currency

mortgages. The new regulations relating to consumer credit quotations will bring them into line with the advertisement regulations.

Consumer credit trade associations, consumer bodies and enforcement authorities were consulted at every stage of the revision.

The commencement order under the Consumer Credit Act 1974 will bring the licensing provisions of the Act into force for individuals, partnerships and other unincorporated businesses which have, until now, been exempt from the Act if they dealt exclusively in loans of £30 or less. From 31 July, it will be an offence to carry on such a business without having applied to the Director General of Fair Trading for a consumer credit licence.

The exemption from licensing was originally intended to reduce the burden on very small firms, but is of little practical benefit to legitimate businesses because there are few businesses which make loans only for amounts of less than £30 and which are not covered by one of the other exemptions from licensing requirement. However, the £30 exemption has proved a significant obstacle to enforcement bodies such as local authority trading standards officers. Not only do they have to prove that the trader has been engaged in moneylending, but that at least some of his agreements have been for sums of more than £30.

Traders who apply to the Director General of Fair Trading for a licence by 31 July will be able to continue to carry on this category of business as they will be deemed to be licensed until the licence application has been finally determined.

Credit brokerage businesses that are carried on by an individual, partnership or unincorporated body and that introduce customers to a source of credit exclusively for sums not exceeding £30 are still exempt from licensing.

Diesel Fuels

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to introduce quality specifications for diesel fuels on the lines of those operated in the United States of America.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have been asked to reply. None. On behalf of the European Commission, the European Central Standards Organisation (CEN) is now working on a quality specification for diesel fuels within the Community.

NATIONAL FINANCE

VAT

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the rates of value added tax charged in each European country for (i) food in shops, (ii) food in restaurants, (iii) books, (iv) magazines, (v) newspapers, (vi) household fuel, (vii) rents, (viii) house purchase, (ix) children's clothing and (x) parish hall or community centres.

Mr. Lilley: The information available for each EC member state is set out in the following tables:

1. Food in shops[1]

Country	Rate per cent.
Belgium	6·0
Denmark	22·0
France	[2]5·5
Germany	7·0
Greece	6·0
Ireland	[3]0·0
Italy	[4]4·0, 9·0
Luxembourg	[5]3·0, 6·0
Netherlands	6·0
Portugal	[6]0·0, 8·0, (6·0)
Spain	6·0
United Kingdom	[7]0·0

[1] Excluding luxury foods.
[2] With certain exceptions, e.g. sweets, ice-cream, margarine which are standard rated at 18·6 per cent.
[3] Alcohol and soft drinks other than fruit juices are liable at 25 per cent. in all circumstances, as is all food and drink supplied through a vending machine.
[4] The lower rate applies to essential foodstuffs such as bread, pasta and fish.
[5] The lower rate applies to meat, meat products, bread and butter.
[6] The rate shown in brackets applies to the autonomous regions of the Madeira and Azores archipelagos. The zero rate applies to unprepared foodstuffs.
[7] With certain exceptions including ice-cream, chocolates and similar confectionery, alcoholic and soft drinks, potato crisps and similar products and pet foods.

2. Food in restaurants

Country	Rate per cent.
Belgium	17·0
Denmark	22·0
France	18·6
Germany	14·0
Greece	[1]—
Ireland	10·0
Italy	[2]9·0
Luxembourg	6·0
Netherlands	6·0
Portugal	[3]8·0 (6·0)
Spain	[4]6·0, 12·0
United Kingdom	15·0

[1] Greece has set its VAT rates at 6 per cent., 18 per cent., and 36 per cent., but full details about the applicability of the rates are not yet available.
[2] Excluding the supply of food in luxury premises including luxury hotels.
[3] Lower rates apply in the autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira archipelagos.
[4] The higher rate applies to services supplied in luxury hotels.

3. Books

Country	Rate per cent.
Belgium	6·0
Denmark	22·0
France	2·1
Germany	7·0
Greece	[1]—
Ireland	0·0
Italy	0·0
Luxembourg	6·0
Netherlands	6·0
Portugal	0·0
Spain	6·0
United Kingdom	0·0

[1] Information not available.

4. Newspapers

Country	Rate per cent.
Belgium	0·0
Denmark	0·0
France	2·1
Germany	7·0
Greece	[1]—
Ireland	10·0
Italy	0·0
Luxembourg	6·0
Netherlands	6·0
Portugal	0·0
Spain	6·0
United Kingdom	0·0

[1] Information not available.

5. Magazines

Country	Rate per cent.
Belgium	6·0
Denmark	22·0
France	2·1
Germany	7·0
Greece	[1]—
Ireland	25·0
Italy	0·0
Luxembourg	6·0
Netherlands	6·0
Portugal	0·0
Spain	6·0
United Kingdom	0·0

[1] Information not available.

6. Household fuel

Country	Coal/ peat/ wood per cent.	Oil per cent.	Gas per cent.	Electricity per cent.
Belgium	6·0	17·0	17·0	17·0
Denmark	22·0	22·0	22·0	22·0
France	18·6	18·6	5·5	5·5
Germany	[2]14·0	14·0	14·0	14·0
Greece[1]	—	—	—	—
Ireland	10·0	10·0	10·0	5·0
Italy	9·0	9·0	9·0	9·0
Luxembourg	6·0	6·0	6·0	6·0
Netherlands	18·5	18·5	18·5	18·5
Portugal	8·0 (6·0)	8·0 (6·0)	8·0 (6·0)	[3]8·0 (6·0)
Spain	12·0	12·0	12·0	12·0
United Kingdom	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0

[1] Information not available.
[2] Wood is taxed at the reduced rate of 7 per cent.
[3] Lower rates apply in autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira archipelagos.

7. Rent

The letting of immovable property is exempt from VAT in every member state, although some member states operate an option to tax in certain circumstances.

8. House purchase

Country	Rate on new buildings per cent.	Rate on second-hand buildings per cent.
Belgium	17·0	Exempt
Denmark	22·0	Exempt
France	18·6	Exempt
Germany	Exempt	Exempt
Greece[1]	—	—
Ireland	10·0	[2]Exempt
Italy	[3]4·0, 19·0	[3]4·0, 19·0
Luxembourg	Exempt	Exempt
Netherlands	18·5	Exempt
Portugal	Exempt	Exempt
Spain	[4]12·0	Exempt
United Kingdom	0·0	Exempt

[1] Information not available.
[2] Or 10 per cent. if developed since 31 October 1972 and input tax credit was claimed.
[3] Certain "low-priced" housing 4 per cent., others 19 per cent.
[4] Or 6 per cent. if the first supply by a constructor of a residential dwelling.

9. Children's Clothing

Country	Rate per cent.
Belgium	19·0
Denmark	22·0
France	18·6
Germany	14·0
Greece	16·0
Ireland	10·0
Italy	19·0
Luxembourg	12·0
Netherlands	18·5
Portugal	[1]17·0, 12·0
Spain	12·0
United Kingdom	0·0

[1] Lower rate applies in the autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira archipelagoes.

10. Parish Hall or Community Centres

Leasing of such buildings is exempt in all member states. For purchase (including construction), in other member states the rates in table 8 above generally apply. In the United Kingdom, the construction of new village halls and similar charitable community buildings will remain zero-rated, following clarification by the EC Commission of last year's judgment of the European Court of justice. The leasing of buildings is exempt unless the charities opt to tax the rents or unless the supply includes the admission to sports to other recreational facilities.

Departmental Relocation

Mr. Robert Sheldon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he is receiving for the relocation of activities in Government Departments.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 4 July 1989]:* My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General informed the House on 9 February 1989, columns *751-52,* that Departments' reports to the Treasury on their relocation reviews during the 1988 public expenditure survey had indicated over 34,000 Civil Service posts under review. Departments are reporting on the progress of their review programmes in the current survey, and my right hon. Friend will be making a further announcement after its conclusion.

Ministers assess the relocation proposals of their own Departments, following Treasury guidelines, and announce their decisions accordingly.

European Monetary System

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the consequences for economic policy of joining the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system at the current exchange rates.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 29 July 1989]:* Maintenance of the exchange rate within the agreed limits would become a proximate objective of policy.

British Pensioners (Canada)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will consider compensating British pensioners in Canada when a high differential between exchange rates exists.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. There are no provisions in the Social Security Acts which allow adjustments to be made when variations occur in exchange rates as between the United Kingdom and other countries. United Kingdom benefit rates are set at levels appropriate to beneficiaries who are in the United Kingdom and it would neither be practicable nor fair to expect the national insurance fund and the Department to meet the costs and administrative difficulties involved in making adjustments to meet the specific situation of pensioners who are living abroad, in some 170 countries, generally as a matter of choice.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Belfast/Dublin Euroroute

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to speed up the dualling of the main Belfast—Dublin Euroroute from the M1 motorway as far as the land frontier with the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Approximately two thirds of the road between the M1 motorway and the border with the Republic of Ireland is already dual carriageway. It is planned to complete the dualling of the last remaining stretch of single carriageway between the M1 and Loughbrickland by May 1992. The Newry bypass, which is being constructed to single carriageway standard, should be completed by August 1994. The remaining stretches of single carriageway will be dualled as and where traffic flows warrant it.

Roads Investment

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he proposes to take to improve investment in roads infrastructure in the Province along the lines of the proposals by the Secretary of State for Transport for England and Wales.

Mr Needham: In keeping with the Government's objective to maintain a sound roads infrastructure in Northern Ireland, I am allocating an additional £28 million for structural maintenance of the existing network over a three-year period. Appropriate priority is being given to the maintenance needs of the main inter-urban routes. We continue to develop the main road system through an annual programme of new construction schemes. In addition, major investment is planned in a new cross-harbour road link to improve traffic conditions in and around central Belfast. Funds have already been made available to enable land and property acquisition to proceed.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

St Helena (Ferry)

Mr Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the circumstances surrounding the Overseas Development Administration involvement in the St Helena ferry construction, and in the decision to give the contract to A and P Appledore.

Mr. Eggar: The aid programme is financing the construction of a new mixed passenger and cargo ship for the Government of St Helena. The contract was placed in December 1987 with Hall Russell Ltd of Aberdeen. This company went into receivership in November 1988, but work on the ship continued. The joint receivers sold Hall Russell's assets in February 1989. A contract to complete the ship was subsequently concluded by the Overseas Development Administration, acting on behalf of the Government of St Helena, with the yard's new owner, A and P Appledore (Aberdeen) Ltd. We are satisfied with both the contract and the good progress that is now being made. The ship is to be launched on 31 October.

EC Expenditure (Developing Countries)

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the European Community Articles under which the Community may co-finance projects in developing countries and development education projects with United Kingdom non-governmental organisations, and the Community's expenditure under each article on projects co-financed with United Kingdom non-governmental organisations in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar: European Community co-financing with European non-governmental organisations for projects in developing countries and development education projects is funded from line 941 of the Community budget. In his reply of 16 June, column *546*, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development listed the amounts granted to United Kingdom non-governmental organisations under this programme in 1987.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Marconi

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General what inquiries are currently being undertaken by the special fraud office into contracts for sonar equipment supplied by Marconi and its associated companies.

The Attorney-General: The serious fraud office, in conjunction with the Ministry of Defence police, is investigating a number of allegations concerning the Marconi Company Limited and its subsidiaries. It would not be appropriate for me to provide more specific information.

TRANSPORT

Coastal Waters (Chemicals)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to introduce a permanent record of all incidents where chemicals contained in drums or containers sink within 100 miles of the British coast.

Mr. Portillo: The present arrangement is that records are kept of chemical losses where on scientific advice salvage is attempted, within United Kingdom waters or on the United Kingdom continental shelf. I am satisfied that that is appropriate.

European Parliament

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when a Minister or official from his Department last attended a meeting of the Transport Committee of the European Parliament.

Mr. Portillo: The former Secretary of State for Transport appeared before the Committee on 23 April 1986. Government officials maintain contacts with Committees of the European Parliament.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if it is his policy to make responses to proposals made by the Transport Committee of the European Parliament which have been endorsed by vote at the European Parliamentary Assembly.

Mr. Portillo: Proposals made under the co-operation procedure are formally considered by the Council of Ministers.

Microlight Plane (Accidents)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the accidents, including fatalities, involving the microlight plane since its introduction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority has the statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of civil aviation within the United Kingdom. I am asking the chairman of the authority to write to my hon. Friend.

Road Tax

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the outcome was of the intensive crackdown on untaxed vehicles following the roadside checks carried out by the London enforcement office assisted by the Metropolitan and City of London police forces for the period following 16 May.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Three thousand eight hundred motorists were reported for not having a current road fund licence on display. These cases are being investigated. Where it is clear that vehicle excise duty has been evaded, those responsible will be prosecuted.

Coastguard Helicopter (Lee-on-Solent)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the number of operations undertaken by the coastguard helicopter based at Lee-on-Solent during its first year of service.

Mr. Portillo: In the first year of operation, which commenced on 15 May 1988, the helicopter attended 146 incidents and assisted 68 persons. Furthermore, during many of those incidents the aircraft participated in rescues in which lifeboats or other craft landed survivors.

M25

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answers of 24 April, *Official Report*, column *447*, and 15 May, *Official Report*, column *11*, if he will now place a copy of some provisional traffic statistics for M25 main carriageway, entry and exit slip roads collected by or for his Department in the Library in advance of the final statistics to be included in the report of the M25 review.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The M25 review report will be published soon.

Air Traffic Controllers

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to discuss staffing levels of air traffic controllers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State frequently meets the chairman of the authority to discuss a whole range of topics of mutual interest.

Railways (Safety)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to set up an independent inquiry into recent rail accidents and safety conditions on British Rail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo *[holding reply 30 June 1989]:* Three separate independent public inquiries have been held into the recent tragic accidents at Clapham junction, Purley and Bellgrove. I am awaiting the reports, which will be published. Mr. Anthony Hidden QC, who is conducting the Clapham junction inquiry, is considering whether any broader management lessons need to be learnt and will take into account any relevant evidence from the other two inquiries.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Universities Funding Council

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will give the cash and constant price figures for funds made available to the UFC for current grants, excluding changes in the home student fee levels, compensation for redundancy and early retirement, information technology and new blood programmes deflated by the gross domestic product deflator, the retail prices index and the university pay and prices index, for each of the years 1980-81 to 1988-89;

(2) if he will give the cash and constant price figures of funds made available to the UFC for recruitment and capital grants, shown separately and each deflated by the appropriate gross domestic product deflator, and the universities retail pay and prices index for each of the years 1980-81 to 1988-89.

Mr. Jackson: Capital and recurrent grants made to universities in Great Britain on the advice of the University Grants Committee were as follows:

£ million

Financial Years	Capital		Recurrent	
	Cash	Real terms	Cash	Real terms
1980-81	97·9	144·6	942·9	1,393·1
1981-82	103·1	138·8	968·0	1,303·2
1982-83	106·8	134·3	1,176·2	1,478·8
1983-84	103·1	123·9	1,222·2	1,468·5
1984-85	106·7	122·2	1,253·2	1,434·9
1985-86	118·2	128·3	1,282·6	1,392·3
1986-87	130·2	136·7	1,320·1	1,386·4
1987-88	128·8	128·8	1,464·0	1,464·0
[1]1988-89	140·1	130·6	1,584·9	1,477·8

[1] Estimate.

This includes cash provision of £50 million in 1982-83 and £30 million in 1983-84 for redundancy and premature retirement compensation: subtracting this from recurrent grant gives real terms figures for those years of £1,415·9 million and £1,432·5 million. Recurrent grant for 1982-83 included provision of over £100 million in compensation for reduced tuition fee income but was not separately identified in later years. Information is not available to make the other adjustments requested.

Real terms are at 1987-88 prices as measured by the GDP deflator which the Government regard as the most appropriate measure of the cost to the economy as a whole and to the public purse of expenditure changes. Over the period in question, this moved from a base of 100 to 158·5. The retail prices index, which relates only to general consumers' expenditure, moved from a base of 100 in January 1981 to 157·9 in January 1989. From November 1980 to January 1989, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals' university pay and prices index moved from a base of 100 to 167·6, although this does not fully reflect the efficiency gains which have occurred over the period.

Ethnic Minority Education

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make available in the Vote Office the recent report produced for the Department on the education of West Indian or Asian children in state schools; if he will summarise in the *Official Report* the main findings of the report; and what action he intends to take to implement the finding of the report.

Mr. Butcher: A copy of "The School Effect: A Study of Multiracial Comprehensives" has been placed in the Library. This report is based on research which followed the progress of 3,000 pupils in 20 urban comprehensives, starting in 1981. The research found striking differences between the schools surveyed in what they did and how they did it. The level of achievement of pupils of similar abilities, regardless of their ethnic or social background, varied markedly according to the school they attended. Differences in examination results between ethnic groups were small and very much smaller than the differences between schools.

This report reinforces the Government's determination to press ahead with the implementation of the national curriculum and with the arrangements for assessment and testing so that every child can have the best possible start in life.

Natural Environment Research Council

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he will make it his policy to give the Natural Environment Research Council the necessary funds to develop work into better understanding of water quality in United Kingdom rivers;

(2) whether he will make it his policy to give the Natural Environment Research Council the necessary funds to develop work in the combined geological and biological research needed to investigate the natural effects and the impact of pollution.

Mr. Jackson: As stated in my replies to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth on 4 July, *Official Report*, columns *124-25*, my right hon. Friend will as usual consider expenditure on all areas of scientific research sponsored by this Department later this year, after studying advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

Research Grants

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money was provided by his Department for research into the links between pollution and human health (i) each year from 1979-89 and (ii) in the current financial year.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* The Medical Research Council, which receives grant-in-aid from this Department, is the main agency through which the Government support medical research. Since 1979-90, the council has spent the following amounts on research into links between pollution and human health, covering research on chemical and physical hazards, sound and vibration, and radiation.

Year	£ million
1979-80	4·3
1980-81	5·8
1981-82	6·1
1982-83	5·8
1983-84	6·1
1984-85	5·5
1985-86	5·4
1986-87	5·2
1987-88	5·3

Figures for 1988-89 and 1989-90 are not yet available.

A small element of the research carried out by the Natural Environment Research Council is also relevant to links between pollution and human health. It is estimated that over the last 10 years £0·3 million of money provided by this Department has been spent on such work.

Additionally, university departments and medical schools support a range of research from block grants from the Universities Funding Council, some of which may be relevant to links between pollution and human health.

PRIME MINISTER

EC Nuclear Policy

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if, during her meeting with heads of governments of the European Community states in Madrid she, or other participants in

the meeting, raised the matter of *(a)* nuclear materials safeguards, *(b)* a common policy on nuclear fuel reprocessing, *(c)* the future of the European fast reactor collaborative programme, *(d)* the role of the Euratom nuclear materials supply agency and *(e)* recent reports from the European Parliament on nuclear power and radiation protection;

(2) if, during the recent meeting of heads of governments of European Community states held in Madrid, the issue of the transfrontier transport of radioactive and toxic waste under the changes to be implemented under the Single European Act in 1992 was discussed; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the statement that I made to the House on 29 June about the meeting of the European Council in Madrid.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if, during the recent summit of heads of Government of European Community states held in Madrid, the matter of the Western European Union and an independent nuclear weapons force for western Europe was discussed.

The Prime Minister: No.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if, during the recent meeting of heads of Governments of the European Community states held in Madrid she raised with the French Prime Minister or Foreign Minister the prospects of France signing the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

The Prime Minister: No.

Hong Kong

Mr. Speller: To ask the Prime Minister if she will appoint one Minister to have specific responsibility for Hong Kong.

The Prime Minister: My noble Friend Lord Glenarthur, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, already has special responsibility for Hong Kong.

Halliburton Manufacturing and Services Ltd.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Prime Minister whether any Government Departments have any current contracts with Halliburton Manufacturing and Services Ltd., 17 Hanover Square, London W1R 0FL, or any of its international branches; and whether she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No central listing of companies in contract with Government Departments is maintained. A review of the records of the main Government Departments shows no evidence of any current contracts with Halliburton Manufacturing and Services Ltd. or any of its international branches.

Bristol Channel (Sewage)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to take personal control of the co-ordination work required to stop the dumping of raw sewage into the Bristol channel and to work towards these beaches attaining the standards of the EC bathing water directive 76/160/EEC.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave him yesterday, column *82*.

Welsh Development Agency (Buy-outs)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if she will institute an external inquiry into the proposed management buy-out proposals by senior executives of the Welsh Development Agency west Wales sector; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what is the Government's policy on management buyouts in the regional areas of the Welsh Development Agency; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him on 3 July at column *16* by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

ENERGY

Cold Fusion (Harwell)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress made in research into cold fusion at the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that following a comprehensive programme of experiments at Harwell, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority has decided to end research into cold fusion as the results have shown no evidence of fusion reactions.

Fuel and Energy Supply Industries

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the environmental impact of his Department's policies, in terms of fuel and energy supply industries for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Parkinson: The utilisation of all energy resources has an impact on the environment. The energy supply and use in this country is determined largely by customer choice and market forces within the current regulatory framework, including environmental regulations administered by the Department of the Environment.

The law requires that the environmental impacts of proposed major energy projects, like many other large developments, be assessed. With certain limitations, new power stations and pipelines fall within the ambit of the Electricity and Pipe-lines Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1989 which my Department administers.

Dounreay

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the uranium oxide breeder fuel incorporated in the Dounreay fast reactor core fuel sub-assemblies has been reprocessed with, or separate from, the fuel sub-assembly uranium/plutonium oxide fuel pins.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the UKAEA and I will ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Power Stations (Plutonium Waste)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), *Official Report*, 20 June, columns 92-3,

the amounts of residual plutonium in wastes at Harwell, Sellafield and Dounreay are notified to his Department for the purposes of nuclear safeguards records.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The industry notified Euratom, through the Department.

Atomic Energy Agency Safeguards Implementation Report

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), *Official Report*, 19 June, column 13, if the International Atomic Energy Agency Safeguards Implementation report for 1988 lists any anomalies in regard to United Kingdom facilities;

(2) how many instances of safeguards goals not being met are listed in the 1988 International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards implementation report, a copy of which has been received by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply. The annual safeguards implementation reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency are confidential. A summary will be published in the agency's 1988 annual report, which will be placed in the Library of the House, when it becomes available.

Gas Emissions

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the carbon dioxide emissions due to fossil fuels utilised in the mining and enrichment of uranium are taken account of in his Department's calculations of current and likely future greenhouse gas emissions; what the emission rate per gigawatt year of electricity currently is; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Carbon dioxide emissions from the front end of the nuclear fuel cycle are negligible and vary according to the country in which the activity is undertaken. Such emissions in the United Kingdom are included in the industrial emissions category.

The emission rate of carbon dioxide for the electricity supplied by the CEGB, from all sources, in 1987 was approximately 7 million tonnes of CO_2 per gigawatt year.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what estimates his Department has produced for the carbon dioxide emissions which occur due to the fossil fuels utilised in the complete nuclear fuel cycle for a Magnox reactor, advance gas-cooled reactor and a pressurised water reactor of the Hinkley C type.

Mr Michael Spicer: My Department has made no detailed estimates of CO_2 emissions from the fuel cycle for nuclear power stations, but in general these will be negligible and depend on the sources of energy supply used to run the individual processes involved.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what specific proposals his Department has put forward for consideration and enactment, in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions such as carbon dioxide and methane, since the seminar held by the Prime Minister on 26 April.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Current policies and initiatives are intended to limit the emission of CO_2. Further measures to cut such emissions will be considered as further scientific evidence is generated.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how many waste landfill sites produce methane gas in the United Kingdom; how much methane gas is estimated to be produced annually in million tonnes of methane and carbon dioxide equivalent; and what estimates he has of additional sources of methane gas;

(2) what level of methane leaks occurs in natural gas systems in the United Kingdom, in both million tonnes and as a percentage of total gas produced, broken down by *(a)* that related to natural gas production and pipelines and *(b)* that related to point of use.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Any site which has taken biodegradeable waste has the potential to produce landfill gas. Records of the types of waste permitted at landfill sites in England and Wales show that there are approximately 3,500 sites which have been licensed to receive waste of the type that can produce landfill gas. In 1988 Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution estimated that some 1,300 of these might require gas management measures. In addition, HMIP is aware of sites producing landfill gas which were licensed to deposit only inert wastes.

My Department has expended £10 million on research and development into biofuels, including £1·1 million on landfill gas up to the end of the financial year 1988-1989. This has resulted in successful demonstrations of landfill gas technology which is leading to increasing commercial exploitation. Recent estimates from the Energy Technology Support Unit suggest that about 0·7 megatonnes of methane are produced annually by landfill sites in the United Kingdom. As molecule for molecule methane is about 25 to 30 times more powerful a greenhouse gas than is carbon dioxide, this represents the equivalent, on a weight for weight basis, of between 50 to 55 megatonnes of CO_2.

We are aware of 14 sites generating electricity from landfill gas with an installed capacity of around 25 MW. We expect the installed capacity to increase to over 40 MW during the next year. The non-fossil fuel obligation in the Electricity Bill should provide an enhanced opportunity for renewable energy, including landfill gas. All economic and practical proposals will be eligible to contribute to the initial obligation to be set towards the end of 1989. Further tranches totalling up to 600 MW reserved exclusively for renewables will be set during the 1990s.

Other significant non-biological sources of methane gas consist of leakages from the natural gas production, distribution and supply system and from the seepage of the gas during coal production—this represented just over 1 megatonnes in 1988 of which about 10 per cent. is utilised and so does not escape to the atmosphere.

Natural gas leakage, together with permitted venting in the United Kingdom continental shelf, amounts to about 1 per cent. of throughput, or about 0·4 megatonnes a year of methane at current levels. The majority of this is attributable to leakage from the distribution system and only a very small proportion relates to the point of use.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gdansk Shipyard

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for the operation in Poland of the Helsinki Final Act of the threat by the managing director

of the Anglo-Polish company Durainsul to sack any worker at its leased port of the Gdansk shipyard who joins a trade union.

Mr. Waldegrave: All CSCE states decided in the 1983 Madrid concluding document to ensure the right of workers freely to establish and join trade unions and other rights as laid down in relevant international instruments. We expect states to comply fully with this and all other CSCE commitments.

Angola

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the political situation in Angola and the prospects for the ending of civil war in that country.

Mrs. Chalker: We warmly welcome the progress made towards internal reconciliation in Angola, notably the meeting between President dos Santos and Dr. Savimbi on 22 June and the agreement to implement a ceasefire from 24 June. We are urging both sides to respect the ceasefire and to continue to show flexibility in the difficult negotiations that lie ahead.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many official visits abroad he has made during his tenure of office; how many officials on average accompanied him on each trip; and what was the total cost.

Mr. Eggar: Since June 1983 the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has made the following number of visits abroad:

	Visits
1983	25
1984	43
1985	49
1986	41
1987	42
1988	40
1989 to date	19
TOTAL	259

On average three officials have accompanied him on each trip.

The total cost was £4,200,000 approximately.

Pakistan

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the current state of relations with Pakistan.

Mr. Eggar: Our excellent relations with Pakistan have been reinforced by the restoration of democracy in that country. We look forward to Prime Minister Bhutto's visit here as a guest of the British Government from 5 to 12 July.

Hydrographers Department

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much he paid the hydrographers department for the last complete period for advice on territorial limits and international maritime advice.

Mr. Eggar: The hydrographer's department is part of the Ministry of Defence and is funded by that Ministry. The hydrographer's department does not charge the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for its advice.

EC (Economic and Monetary Union)

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to attend the European Economic Community Council of Ministers to discuss preparations for the proposed inter-governmental conference on economic and monetary union.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I expect to attend the Foreign Affairs Council on 17 and 18 July. The agenda will include follow-up to the Madrid European Council.

Hong Kong

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he had had with representatives of the Government of Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs visited Hong Kong from 2 to 4 July. During his visit he met the Governor, senior officials and representatives of the community of Hong Kong. Their discussions covered the range of current issues in Hong Kong, including recent developments in China and their implications for Hong Kong.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet with his European Community counterparts to discuss the future of Hong Kong citizens.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has already discussed this matter with his EC colleagues at the recent meeting of the European Council in Madrid. We will continue to urge the international community to join us in doing everything possible to restore the confidence of people in Hong Kong following the recent appalling events in China.

Atwah Lufti Sumar Hirzallah

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Israeli local authorities about the killing of Atwah Lufti Sumar Hirzallah; and what response he obtained.

Mr. Waldegrave: None.

Departmental Interviews

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on recording interviews given by his Department to journalists.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Ministerial interviews are normally recorded.

China

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on the common action being taken by the European Community against the Government of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Eggar: The EC issued a joint statement on 6 June which strongly condemned the violent suppression of the demonstrations in China. On 15 June the presidency carried out a demarche, stressing the Twelve's grave concern at continuing repression and expressing hope that economic and political reform could be put back on course, together with adherence to respect for human rights. On 17 June a further demarche was made, appealing for clemency for the first persons sentenced to death in connection with the demonstrations. On 27 June the European Council agreed a declaration on China which reiterated the Twelve's condemnation and adopted a package of measures to be taken by the Community and its member states.

Non-Proliferation Treaty

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the countries that have neither signed nor ratified, acceded or succeeded to the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Waldegrave: The following states are not parties to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty:

Albania	Kuwait[1]
Algeria	Mauritania
Andorra	Mozambique
Angola	Monaco
Argentina	Nauru
Brazil	Niger
Burma	Oman
Chile	Pakistan
China	St. Christopher and Nevis
Comoros	South Africa
Cuba	United Arab Emirates
Djibouti	United Republic of Tanzania
France	Vanuatu
Guyana	Zambia
India	Zimbabwe
Israel	

[1] Signed the Treaty on 22 August 1968, but has not ratified.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries currently party to the non-proliferation treaty with their dates *(a)* of signature, *(b)* of subsequent deposit of instrument of ratification, accession or succession and *(c)* of safeguards agreement in force with the International Atomic Energy Agency under the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am placing in the Library of the House a list of the dates of signature and ratification, accession or succession to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Details of safeguards agreements are contained in the publication "Agreements Registered with the International Atomic Energy Agency", a copy of which will be placed in the Library of the House. We understand that the publication is currently being updated by the agency, and a copy of the revised edition will be placed in the Library when it is issued.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries that at present have signed the non-proliferation treaty but have not ratified, acceded or succeeded to it, with their dates of signature.

Mr. Waldegrave: Kuwait is the only state in this category—date of signature 22 August 1968.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those occasions since May 1979 when representations concerning the non-proliferation treaty have been made at ministerial level by Her Majesty's Government to those states not party to the non-proliferation treaty at the time of the representation.

Mr. Waldegrave Such representations have been made at a variety of levels on numerous occasions. A detailed list could, however, be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

India (Non-Proliferation)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), *Official Report*, 14 June, column *475*, he will set out in the *Official Report* the last opportunity deemed suitable when Her Majesty's Government's views on non-proliferation were made clear to the Indian Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs most recently raised non-proliferation issues with members of the Indian Government during his visit to India from 28 March to 1 April.

Poland

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representation he has made to the Government of Poland regarding recent progress in that country towards democracy and individual freedom; and if he will make a statement on the current state of relations with Poland.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs recently had the opportunity to discuss developments in Poland, including the elections, with both General Jaruzelski and Professor Geremek of Solidarity. I, too, had the pleasure of meeting Professor Geremek. May I refer my hon. Friend to my recent statements of 6 April and 14 June, on our relations with Poland.

Hungary

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Hungary regarding recent progress in that country towards democracy and individual freedom; and if he will make a statement on the current state of relations with Hungary.

Mr. Waldegrave: We welcome Hungary's moves towards a multi-party system and a state based on the rule of law. My right hon. and learned Friend discussed these matters with the Hungarian State Minister, Imre Pozsgay, on 25 April. I am visiting Hungary next week, and will meet a wide range of party, Government and opposition figures.

Our bilateral relations with Hungary are excellent, with regular contact at all levels, as befits a country in the vanguard of political reform in Eastern Europe.

Council of Europe

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list the member countries of the Council of Europe that have now ratified and put in effect (i) the European social charter, (ii) the European convention on social security, (iii) the European code on social security and (iv) the European convention on human rights.

Mrs. Chalker: The following is a list of member states of the Council of Europe which have ratified and put into effect:

(i) *The European Social Charter:*
Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom;

(ii) *The European Convention on Social Security:*
Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Turkey;

(iii) *The European Code of Social Security:*
Belgium, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom; and

(iv) *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights):*
Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Farah Syed

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Mrs. Farah Syed, who was born in 1971 and whose reference is IMM/96415, first applied to the post of Islamabad to enter the United Kingdom; and when a decision is going to be taken on her application.

Mr. Eggar: In accordance with the recent guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the question to the correspondence unit of migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Member will receive a reply from the unit in due course.

Antarctica (French Airstrip)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the purpose of the airstrip being constructed by the French in Antarctica; and what effect this project is having on wildlife in the region.

Mr. Eggar: The airstrip is needed to facilitate glaciological research in a key area of the Antarctic interior. The results of this research will be made available to Antarctic treaty parties.

There have been differing reports from environmentalists and the French authorities on the extent of the effect on wildlife in the region. The French Government have promised to produce a paper on the construction of the airstrip which will give further details.

EEC Budget

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will set out in tabular form the total net payments or total net receipts of each of the member states for the EEC budget since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply. The information requested concerning the United Kingdom is set out in the table. Comparable figures for other member states are not available.

Net contribution to European Community budget

Year	*£ million*
1979	947
1980	706
1981	397
1982	606
1983	647
1984	656
1985	1,808
1986	572
1987	1,713
1988	1,362

ENVIRONMENT

Equity Share Schemes

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities in England and Wales have plans to build houses under equity share schemes.

Mr. Trippier: The information for English local authorities is not available centrally. For information about Wales, I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Valuation and Community Charge Tribunals

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reviews his Department is carrying out in respect of the valuation and community charge tribunals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Independent consultants will shortly undertake a review of valuation and community charge tribunals and make recommendations on the pay, conditions of service and grading of their staff.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will delay the water privatisation flotation until 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: No. We plan to offer the industry for sale to the public in November 1989.

Redundant Land

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give a breakdown both by individual local authorities and the latest available year of

the 54,000 acres of council-owned derelict and redundant land referred to in the 1987-88 report on the inner cities programme.

Mr. Trippier: The amount of unused and underused land owned by local authorities and entered on the land register at 30 June 1989 was 49,931 acres. I have arranged for a breakdown of this by individual local authorities to be placed in the Library today.

Sewage Outfalls (North-West)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the intended frequency of routine storm water discharges from the three short sea outfalls along the Fylde coast is within the guidelines for disposal of sewage to the sea agreed in 1988 between Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the water industry.

Mr. Howard: The North West water authority has applied for discharge consents in respect of a proposed long sea outfall and three associated storm water overflows to bring bathing waters along the Fylde coast up to EC standards, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will consider, as part of their assessment, the authority's proposals for dealing with storm water in the light of its published "Guidance on Long Sea Outfalls"—a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contacts his Department has had with the North West water authority over proposals to construct a long sea outfall at Rossall point on the Fylde coast.

Mr. Howard: North West Water applied to my Department on 20 December 1988 for consent to discharge sewage effluent into the Lune Deep off Morecambe Bay from a proposed new long sea outfall at Rossall point. The applications are still being considered by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department has on the differences between the top and bottom currents at and around the likely areas of impact in the Lune Deep of the proposed long sea outfall discharge at Rossall point on the Fylde coast.

Mr. Howard: The North West water authority has supplied information to my Department both on top and bottom currents which were measured at locations related to the proposed Lune Deep outfall site. The water authority has pointed out that the measurements are consistent with the hydrodynamic model of the scheme and with observed sediment transport patterns.

Air Conditioning

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what standards are laid down for installation of air conditioning in office buildings;

(2) what standards are laid down for the operation of air conditioning in office buildings.

Mr. Trippier: There are no requirements in the Building Regulations 1985 which relate directly to the installation and operation of air conditioning equipment. The code of practice in widespread use is BS 5750: 1979, which covers the design installation and maintenance of such systems.

River Pollution (North-West)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will call for a report on all river pollution incidents in the north-west in the last 12 months; if he will publish *(a)* details of such incidents and *(b)* action taken as a result of such incidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Responsibility for the control of river pollution in the north-west rests with the North West water authority. The authority reports incidents in its annual reports, and it is for them to take decisions on the action needed in individual cases. The only exceptions to this would be incidents caused by the authority itself. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution investigates incidents of this kind which are brought to its attention and takes appropriate action. In addition it is, of course, open to anyone to take independent action in any particular case.

Water Authorities (Debt Write-offs)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the proposed debt write-offs for each water authority prior to privatisation.

Mr. Howard: These will be determined nearer to flotation. I refer to the fuller answer that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) on 18 May.

Vacant Council Property

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report*, the 30 local authorities in England with the largest number of council-owned properties vacant, at the most recent date, with the number in each case.

Mr. Trippier: Based on local authorities' housing investment programme returns for April 1988, the list is as follows:

	Number vacant
(1) Liverpool	5,416
(2) Manchester	5,166
(3) Sandwell	3,062
(4) Sheffield	2,856
(5) Hackney	2,692
(6) Tower Hamlets	2,526
(7) Birmingham	2,339
(8) Sunderland	2,106
(9) Salford	1,993
(10) Newham	1,961
(11) Southwark	1,910
(12) Wolverhampton	1,737
(13) Newcastle upon Tyne	1,651
(14) Leeds	1,486
(15) Islington	1,403
(16) Kirklees	1,402
(17) Bradford	1,262
(18) Leicester	1,220
(19) Lambeth	1,156
(20) Oldham	1,129
(21) Rochdale	1,062
(22) Kingston upon Hull	1,019
(23) Nottingham	1,016
(24) Wandsworth	994
(25) North Tyneside	991
(26) Walsall	986
(27) Gateshead	949
(28) Lewisham	943
(29) Dudley	928
(30) Greenwich	911

Council Property (Squatters)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the 30 local authorities in England with the largest number of council-owned properties occupied by squatters, with the number in each case.

Mr. Trippier: Based on local authorities' housing investment programme returns for April 1988, the list is as follows:

	Dwellings in unlicensed occupation
(1) Southwark	1,672
(2) Lambeth	1,170
(3) Hackney	953
(4) Islington	449
(5) Tower Hamlets	426
(6) Camden	340
(7) Brent	229
(8) Haringey	165
(9) Lewisham	163
(10) Hammersmith and Fulham	143
(11) Westminster	98
(12) Ealing	79
(13) Manchester	69
(14) Liverpool	67
(15) Wandsworth	65
(16) Newham	52
(17) Waltham Forest	48
(18) Greenwich	27
(19) Enfield	22
(20) Hounslow	18
(21) Merton	18
(22) Forest Heath	15
(23) Birmingham	14
(24) Kingston upon Thames	8
(25) Bromley	7
(26) Redbridge	7
(27) Kensington and Chelsea	6
(28) Barking and Dagenham	6
(29) Bristol	6
(30) Richmond upon Thames	5

Water Authorities' Accounts

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the water authorities' unaudited accounts for 1988-89 will be made available.

Mr. Howard: The water authorities unaudited accounts for 1988-89 are to be placed on public deposit in accordance with statutory provisions tomorrow morning. I shall arrange for copies to be placed in the Library of the House. The annual reports and audited accounts will be published later in the summer and laid before Parliament at that time.

Business Rate (Suffolk and Norfolk)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he makes of the unified business rate in Suffolk and Norfolk.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer, 3 July 1989]:* We estimate that if the uniform business rate had taken effect this year it would have been about 35 pence in the pound in England.

Rating Reform

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to seek to place a duty on local authorities to compensate community charge and business rate payers for service which falls below an agreed minimum standard.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer, 3 July 1989]:* No. Simple, clear community charge bills will enable chargepayers to judge the efficiency and value for money with which local authorities provide services. Chargepayers will be able to express in the political and electoral processes any concern that they may feel about standards of service. In future, the business rate poundage will be set nationally, but authorities will have a duty to consult representatives of business in their area about their expenditure proposals and in that way business ratepayers will be able to make their views known.

Community Charge (Rebate)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to announce details of the rebate of up to 80 per cent. of the community charge to be made available to persons on low incomes; and when information on how to apply for such rebates will be sent to local authorities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The detailed arrangements for rebating the community charge are set out in the draft Community Charge Benefits (General) Regulations 1989 which were circulated to all authorities at the end of May. Application procedures, within the terms of these regulations, are a matter for local authorities themselves.

WALES

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of all discussions that have taken place between either Mr. Waterstone and Mr. Gwyn Jones of the Welsh Development Agency's office in Cardiff and representatives of merchant banks and large accounting firms concerning management buyouts and other possible ways of privatising the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The chairman and chief executive of the Welsh Development Agency have had no discussions at any stage with merchant banks or large accounting firms about a management buyout of the agency either in whole or in part. The Welsh Development Agency Act 1975 obliges the agency to seek to increase private sector involvement in its operations. To this end, possible means of stimulating such involvement are kept continuously under review and professional advisers of all sorts have been involved in discussions with the agency over a period of several years.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the amount of advance factory building that has taken place by the west Wales region of the Welsh Development Agency for each year from 1983-84 to the present time; what are the future plans; and what percentage each year the figures represent of the total factory building programme throughout Wales by the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

Year	*Area completed in West Wales[1] 000' sq ft*	*Percentage of total Agency build*
1983-84	155	19·9
1984-85	70	22·0
1985-86	—	—
1986-87	5	0·1
1987-88	—	—
1988-89	28	2·8

[1] The year on year figures are not comparable due to change in the agency's regional office structure in July 1988 which removed responsibility for urban areas, including Llanelli, from the west Wales region.

As regards future plans the agency intends to start work on 62,000 sq ft of factory space in the current financial year.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if there are any proposals in any of the other regional offices of the Welsh Development Agency similar to the management buy-out proposals revealed in west Wales on 29 June; and whether he will provide details.

Mr. Peter Walker: Neither I nor the board of the Welsh Development Agency are aware of any such proposals.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will instruct *(a)* the chairman and *(b)* the chief executive of the Welsh Development Agency to issue public statements concerning the proposed management buy out proposals of senior executives of the west Wales Welsh Development Agency sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Welsh Development Agency has already issued a statement, which I fully endorse.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the number of meetings and the dates *(a)* the senior executives of the Welsh Development Agency, west Wales sector, *(b)* the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency and *(c)* the chief executive of the Welsh Development Agency had with interested parties concerning management buyout proposals; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish the documents concerning the proposed west Wales Welsh Development Agency management buyout proposals; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will make a statement on the suspension of two of the Welsh Development Agency's west Wales senior officials.

Mr. Peter Walker: No. This is a matter for the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is his estimate of the assets of the west Wales sector of the Welsh Development Agency involved in the proposed management buyout; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the value of the Welsh Development Agency property portfolio *(a)* in west Wales, *(b)* in each of the subregional sectors of the Welsh Development Agency and *(c)* in Wales as a whole; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The informaton is as follows:

Welsh Development Agency property portfolio valuation as at 31 March 1989

	£ million
West Wales	5·681
South Wales Valleys	75·782
South Wales East	63·305
North East Wales	50·417
North West Wales	6·584
South Wales West	47·946
Wales Total	249·715

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to sell assets of the Welsh Development Agency in the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Welsh Development Agency has set itself a property sales target of £15 million for the current financial year.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans there are to increase factory building by the Welsh Development Agency in the west Wales sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Welsh Development Agency intends to start work on 62,000 sq ft of advance factory and workshop space in west Wales in the current financial year. This is more than double the area completed in 1988-89 and compares with an average area of 24,000 sq ft completed in the three years before 1979-80.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which of *(a)* T. R. Jones Ltd., Ammanford, *(b)* Dinefwr Enterprise Company, *(c)* Mainport Group, Pembroke Dock, *(d)* Pembrokeshire Business Initiative, *(e)* Morgan Marine, Llandybie, *(f)* Avon Inflatables, Onfen, *(g)* Milford Haven Port Authority and *(h)* Delanair Ltd. have received Welsh Development Agency financial or consultancy assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Four of the organisations listed—Dinefwr Enterprise Company, Mainport Group, Pembrokeshire Business Initiative and Morgan Marine—have received financial or consultancy assistance from the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many meetings he has had with the *(a)* chairman of the Welsh Development Agency, *(b)* chief executive and *(c)* west Wales Welsh Development Agency executives in (i) 1988 and (ii) 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I frequently meet the chairman and the chief executive of the Welsh Development Agency. I am not aware of having met the agency's west Wales executives.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has received any report of the meeting of west Wales executives and the chairman and chief executive of the Welsh Development Agency in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I received no such report until earlier this week when the chairman of the WDA informed me that the meeting had taken place.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what disciplinary measures he has instituted within his Department on the matter of proposed management buy-outs in the wes: Wales Welsh Development Agency following the suspension of two senior officers in west Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: None, as none is needed.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last visited the *(a)* headquarters and *(b)* west Wales offices of the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I last visited the Welsh Development Agency's headquarters on 2 May. I have never visited the agency's west Wales offices.

Council House Sales

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was *(a)* the number and *(b)* the value of mortgages (£000s) on completed disposals for (i) full ownership and (ii) shared ownership by each local authority in Wales, and for Wales as a whole during (1) 1980-81, (2) 1981-82, (3) 1982-83, (4) 1983-84, (5) 1984-85, (6) 1985-86, (7) 1986-87, (8) 1987-88 and (9) 1988-89;

(2) what was the area of land made available to private developers under licence for building for sale schemes by each local authority in Wales, and for Wales as a whole during *(a)* 1980-81, *(b)* 1981-82, *(c)* 1982-83, *(d)* 1983-84, *(e)* 1984-85, *(f)* 1985-86, *(g)* 1986-87, *(h)* 1987-88 and *(i)* 1988-89;

(3) what was the capital sum received from disposals completed during *(a)* 1980-81, *(b)* 1981-82, *(c)* 1982-83, *(d)* 1983-84, *(e)* 1984-85, *(f)* 1985-86, *(g)* 1986-87, *(h)* 1987-88 and *(i)* 1988-89 by each local authority in Wales, and for Wales as a whole, (i) to sitting tenants and (ii) to others for (1) full ownership (2) shared ownership;

(4) what was the number of admitted shared ownership claims withdrawn from each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole during *(a)* 1980-81, *(b)* 1981-82, *(c)* 1982-83, *(d)* 1983-84, *(e)* 1984-85, *(f)* 1985-86, *(g)* 1986-87, *(h)* 1987-88 and *(i)* 1988-89;

(5) what was the number of claims to right to shared ownership leases received by each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole during *(a)* 1980-81, *(b)* 1981-82, *(c)* 1982-83, *(d)* 1983-84, *(e)* 1984-85, *(f)* 1985-86, *(g)* 1986-87, *(h)* 1987-88 and *(i)* 1988-89;

(6) what was the number of disposals of dwellings built and financed by private developers on local authority owned land for *(a)* full ownership and *(b)* shared ownership as a whole during (i) 1980-81, (ii) 1981-82, (iii) 1982-83, (iv) 1983-84, (v) 1984-85, (vi) 1985-86, (vii) 1986-87, (viii) 1987-88 and (ix) 1988-89;

(7) what was the total number of completed disposals of *(a)* flats and *(b)* houses for (i) full ownership and (ii) shared ownership by each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole during (1) 1980-81, (2) 1981-82, (3) 1982-83, (4) 1983-84, (5) 1984-85, (6) 1985-86, (7) 1986-87, (8) 1987-88 and (9) 1988-89.

Mr. Grist: The information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mid Wales Development

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has discussed privatisation plans with the board of the Development Board for Rural Wales, Mid Wales Development.

Mr. Peter Walker: No, but I encourage the board to consider any opportunities for increasing the effectiveness of its activities through greater private sector involvement.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he is aware of any management buyout plans at Mid Wales Development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am not aware of any such proposals.

Welsh Language Teaching

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to publish his proposals for the teaching of Welsh in the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Secretary of State for Wales has today published his proposals for Welsh in the national curriculum. These proposals are based on the recommendations contained in the final report of the working group set up by the Secretary of State in April 1988 to consider appropriate attainment targets and programmes of study for Welsh. The proposals are being distributed widely for consultation. Copies will be sent to all primary and secondary schools and made available to governing bodies. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library of the House.

HEALTH

Census Statistics

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what, further to the Under-Secretary's reply to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury on 26 May, is his policy on the extent to which the presentation of census statistics will be described in terms of postcodes such as to make possible access to individual household data by computer comparison with other registers.

Mr. Freeman: The policy of successive Governments has been to take all practicable steps to protect the confidentiality of census information on individual people and households. In its White Paper on the 1991 Census of Population, Cm 430, published in July 1988, the Government confirmed that, in releasing the statistics from census, whether using postcodes or not, all possible steps will be taken to prevent the inadvertent disclosure of information about identifiable individuals. The means of presenting statistical summaries for small areas from the 1991 census are at present under discussion.

Head Lice

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will initiate a programme of research into the control of head lice infestation in schools.

Mr. Freeman: The Department is currently carrying out a feasibility study to identify the broad issues of concern in

the school health services and the problem of head lice infestation is one of the issues that we are looking at. Once this study is complete we shall consider what, if any, action is needed for any or all of these services, including the need for any research or advice on this problem.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice he gives to area health authorities concerning the containment of the problem of head lice infestation in schools.

Mr. Freeman: Responsibility for the control of head lice infestation among pupils lies with individual health authorities through the school health service. No specific advice is given to health authorities; it is for them to determine the policy for dealing with outbreaks of infestation in the light of local circumstances.

Every school has a named school nurse to advise and help on this problem. Many have stopped routine head inspections and are now adopting more positive practices through health education programmes and advice to parents on head lice infestation and how to deal with it. By increasing parental awareness, cases of infestation can be dealt with more promptly.

Abortions (Hemel Hempstead)

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions have been carried out at Hemel Hempstead general hospital in each of the last four calendar years; under which provisions of the Abortion Act they were carried out; and what was *(a)* the age and marital status of the mother, *(b)* gestational age of the foetus and *(c)* the abortion method used.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested cannot be released on the grounds of maintaining confidentiality. The readily available data for usual residents of North-West Hertfordshire district health authority are shown in the tables.

Table 1
Legal abortions, usual residents North West Hertfordshire DHA, 1984 to 1987, numbers and age of mother

Age	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Under 16	17	15	10	14
16-19	179	186	150	146
20-24	194	180	180	196
25-34	203	210	187	208
35-44	95	108	94	92
45+	4	1	4	1
Not stated	—	—	—	—
Total	692	700	625	657

Table 2
Legal abortions, usual residents North West Hertfordshire DHA, 1984 to 1987, marital status, previous live and stillborn children[1], area of termination (distinguishing regional health authority of usual residents and category of premises).

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Marital Status				
Single	425	415	396	424
Married	195	196	166	154
Other	72	89	63	79
Parity[1]				
0	433	428	415	421
1-3	232	250	193	208
4+	18	16	13	23
Unknown	9	6	4	5
RHA of termination				
Home NHS	222	197	145	202
RHA Non-NHS	3	12	53	41
Other NHS	38	42	24	28
RHA Non-NHS	429	449	403	386

Hospices

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average length of time spent in a hospice by a terminally ill patient.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that the information is not available centrally.

Delta Te Immune Support Therapy

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement on the sale of Delta Te immune support therapy;

(2) what action is being taken under the Medicines Act 1968 to prohibit the sale of Delta Te immune support therapy;

(3) what representations his Department has received about the sale of Delta Te immune support therapy.

Mr. Mellor: The Department is pursuing inquiries into the supply of Delta Te promoted for the treatment of AIDS, and the managing director of the company concerned has been interviewed. Representations have been received from journal and television reporters, who are currently assisting our inquiries. The product has not been licensed for supply as a medicine in this country, so any sale as a medicine would be illegal. On the information that we have there is no evidence to support the claims being made for the substance. To prevent the sales of such products we shall not hesitate to take prosecution proceedings where, on legal advice, there is prima facie evidence that the terms of the Medicines Act have been breached.

South-East Thames RHA

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action the South-East Thames regional health authority will be taking on the basis of the recommendations of the report it commissioned by Touche Ross Management Consultants into the functions of the salaries and wages department in each of the local authorities in its region; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the cost to the South-East Thames regional health authority of the report it recently commissioned Touche Ross Management Consultants to undertake into the functions of the salaries and wages department in each of the local health authorities in its region.

Mr. Mellor: The report reviewed with district health authorities in the region the paymaster services carried out, covering both payroll and creditor payment functions.

The cost of the report is a matter for the regional health authority. I understand that action plans are being agreed between the region and the district health authorities and the hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the regional health authority for more information.

Adverse Drug Reactions

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list in the *Official Report* those European Community directives which relate to the under-reporting of serious adverse drug reactions.

Mr. Mellor: We are not aware of any specific reference to the under-reporting of adverse drug reactions in the European Community directives concerned with medicinal products.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, *Official Report*, 2 March, column *319*, what investigative action is taken when there is concern about possible under-reporting of serious adverse reactions.

Mr. Mellor: It depends upon the circumstances of the particular case. In general terms, such investigations would include scrutiny of all relevant documentation, obtaining the licence holder's response to salient issues and, where necessary, meetings and interviews with senior representatives of the licence holder.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, *Official Report*, 2 March, column *319*, from what sources his Department has received information which has led to concern about possible under-reporting of serious adverse reactions.

Mr. Mellor: From a television programme, the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South himself and professional analysis by the licensing authority of data submitted by the licence holder in connection with other licensing matters.

Eye Tests

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will conduct an urgent national survey to ascertain the range of charges being made by opticians for eye tests.

Mr. Mellor: The Department hopes to survey various aspects of sight tests, probably later this year.

Immigration

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate where immigrants into the United Kingdom from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan for each year since 1970 have settled within the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 28 June 1989]:* I regret that data are not available in the form requested. However, estimates of the numbers of people resident in Great Britain in 1986 and 1987 who were born in the New Commonwealth or Pakistan, and who were of West Indian, African, Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi ethnic origin are shown in the following tables.

One table gives these estimated numbers resident in Great Britain who had entered the United Kingdom in each year between 1970 and 1985. The other table gives these estimated numbers by standard region/country and metropolitan county of residence for those who had entered the United Kingdom between 1970 and 1985, inclusive.

These estimates have been obtained by grossing up the results of the 1986 and 1987 labour force surveys. More detailed analyses would be unreliable because of sampling variability.

Estimated numbers of people resident in Great Britain in 1986-87 who were born in the New Commonwealth or Pakistan and who were of West Indian, African, Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi ethnic origin

Year of entry into United Kingdom	*Estimated number (thousands)*
1970	35
1971	32
1972	55
1973	23
1974	27
1975	40
1976	40
1977	22
1978	27
1979	29
1980	23
1981	21
1982	31
1983	29
1984	21
1985	20
1970-85	475

Year of entry into United Kingdom: 1970-85, inclusive

Region/country and metropolitan county of residence	*Estimated number (thousands)*
North	9
Yorkshire and Humberside	39
East Midlands	35
East Anglia	7
South East	264
South West	3
West Midlands	66
North West	40
Wales	6
Scotland	7
Great Britain	476
Tyne and Wear	5
South Yorkshire	4
West Yorkshire	33
Greater London	204
West Midlands	55
Greater Manchester	28
Merseyside	3
All metropolitan counties	333

(Totals for Great Britain do not agree because of rounding).

Death Statistics

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of British people who die each year from diseases related to environmental pollution; and what are the Government's plans to reduce that number.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 4 July 1989]:* There is no clear evidence that deaths occur as a result of current levels of pollution of the environment by man with chemical agents. Past exposure to high levels of air pollutants may still have some influence on current death rates, but discharges to the environment are now controlled so as to provide large safety margins or, in the case of substances potentially toxic at very low dose, by ensuring a very small risk.

There is no scientific basis for estimating the total impact of many substances occurring simultaneously in the environment at trace levels, but it is considered to be small compared with lifestyle factors such as smoking. The Government, on advice from a number of advisory committees, monitor for possible environmental causes of disease and will act to prevent or limit potentially harmful exposures whenever they are identified. In the meanwhile, the Government encourage prudence in the use of chemicals or potentially polluting technologies. In particular the Government are engaged in updating the arrangements for pollution control to ensure that these are integrated, wide-ranging and effective.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Acid Parties

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement of his policy towards the policing of acid parties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to questions from the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) on 29 June, at columns *517-18*.

Risley Remand Centre

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were transferred from Risley remand centre after the recent disturbances and roof top protests; how many of them were from Liverpool; where they were transferred to; and how many complaints have been received from prisoners or their representatives who have been transferred about their treatment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A total of 255 prisoners were transferred to other prisons:

60 to Leeds
58 to Liverpool
41 to Manchester
35 to Durham
22 to Shrewsbury
20 to Preston
12 to Birmingham
7 to Hull

One of these prisoners has submitted a petition complaining about conditions at Risley and nine others have complained by petition and two by letters to hon. Members about matters related to their transfer. In addition, some transferred prisoners were among those who gave written or oral evidence to the inquiry into the disturbance at Risley.

To establish how many of the transferred prisoners were from Liverpool and how many made complaints about treatment in evidence to the inquiry would entail disproportionate cost. I am advised that when the disturbance started about 45 per cent. of those held in Risley were from Liverpool.

Football Matches

Mr. Eddie Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the figures of football-related arrests *(a)* for the season 1988-89 for all English clubs and *(b)* as a percentage of total attendances at football matches during that season.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that the Association of Chief Police Officers is collating returns from police forces relating to arrests, ejections and attendances at all Football League matches in England and Wales during the 1988-89 season. These figures are expected to be available soon.

Immigration

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there are any plans afoot to improve the staffing situation at the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service office, based at the Scottish Office in Glasgow, to alleviate the delays in hearing immigration appeals in Scotland.

Mr. Renton: I have nothing to add to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) on 26 June at column *322*.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Liverpool Passport Office

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to relocate the Liverpool passport office to an area of the country needing additional jobs.

Mr. Renton: I appreciate the concern and irritation felt generally as a result of recent strike action at the Liverpool passport office. There are, however, no current plans to relocate this office. As I indicated on 14 June in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) at column *462* we shall be reviewing the location and number of the regional passport offices in general later this year.

West Midlands Police

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to what breaches of discipline have been alleged against Superintendent James Kelly; and what action has been taken.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that in October 1986 Detective Superintendent Kelly was charged with four offences of discreditable conduct and was reprimanded on each charge. He was not a member of the serious crime squad.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to on how many occasions complaints have been received against Detective Sergeant Michael Hornby; and what action has been taken in each case.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that a number of complaints have been recorded against detective sergeant Hornby since 1974. All the complaints have been fully investigated. In only one instance, in 1980, did he face formal disciplinary proceedings. Disciplinary records are destroyed after seven years.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief

constable of the West Midlands as to during which years Detective Sergeant Brian Morton and Detective Constables Martin Lambert and Graham Stephens were members of the West Midlands serious crime squad.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that detective sergeant Morton was a member of the serious crime squad from March 1973 until February 1976. Detective constables Lambert and Stephen were not members of the serious crime squad.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to how many of the officers involved in investigations into the Paul Dandy case were also involved in questioning those later convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that no officer was involved in the Paul Dandy case and also in questioning of those later convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to how many of the officers involved in investigations into the case of Mr. Ronnie Boldon were involved in questioning those later convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that one officer was involved in the Ronnie Boldon case and also in questioning of those later convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to what action was taken against the police officers responsible for assaulting junior Patrick Williams in connection with attempts to procure a confession.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that three officers were convicted at Birmingham crown court on 1 November 1983 of assault occasioning actual bodily harm. Detective sergeant Morton was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment (six months suspended for two years). Detective constables Stephen and Lambert were sentenced to nine months imprisonment (four and a half months suspended for two years). The officers subsequently faced disciplinary proceedings and were dismissed from the force on 4 November 1983.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to how many complaints have been received against officers of the West Midlands serious crime squad for each year since 1979; and what action has been taken in each case.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand form the chief constable of the West Midlands police that this information is not readily available and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands on what action was taken against the officers responsible for obtaining a confession from Mr. Derek Gordon for a murder of which he was subsequently acquitted.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that an investigation into Mr. Gordon's complaint was conducted by a senior officer of the Metropolitan police in 1985 under the supervision of the Police Complaints Authority. Two officers were subsequently charged with disciplinary offences and were fined. Other officers were given advice by their supervisory officers in connection with unsatisfactory standards of documentation.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to how many of the officers involved in investigations into the case of Derek Gordon were also involved in questioning those later convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that two officers were involved in the Derek Gordon case and also in the questioning of those later convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to how long police cadet Adrian Dart remained in the force after testifying against three of his colleagues convicted of trying to extort confessions by violence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that police constable Dart resigned from the West Midlands police force four months after three officers were convicted in November 1983 of assault occasioning actual bodily harm.

Hospital Patients (Voting)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider making arrangements for those admitted to hospital at short notice, who are registered on the appropriate electoral rolls, but do not have sufficient notice of their admission to vote by post, proxy or in person, to vote; what representations he has received about hospital patients being disfranchised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) on 21 June 1989 at column *131*. Amendment of the regulations about absent voting so as to cover those unexpectedly admitted to hospital is one of the options that we are considering for easing the application procedures.

Mr. Salman Rushdie

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the cost to public funds of the security provided to Mr. Salman Rushdie; and when such security started.

Mr. Douglas Hurd: On 14 February 1989 the Metropolitan police decided to provide Mr. Rushdie with

protection. This followed the threat to his life made by the Ayatollah Khomeini. It would not be sensible to disclose information about police protection which would indicate its scale in a particular case.

Football Grounds (Policing)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate his Department has made of the cost of policing football grounds in 1990-91.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have made no such estimate. As to earlier years, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) on 15 June at column *507*.

Privacy

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is in a position to announce the name of the chairman and the terms of reference of the committee to review privacy and related matters.

Mr. Hurd: Mr. David Calcutt QC, Master of Magdalene college, Cambridge has accepted the offer of the chairmanship of the committee to review privacy and related matters. The terms of reference will be:

"In the light of recent public concern about intrusions into the private lives of individuals by certain sections of the press, to consider what measures (whether legislative or otherwise) are needed to give further protection to individual privacy from the activities of the press and improve recourse against the press for the individual citizen, taking account of existing remedies, including the law on defamation and breach of confidence; and to make recommendations."

A further announcement will be made about the membership of the committee. We understand that the chairman will meanwhile be issuing early invitations to submit evidence. We have asked the chairman to complete his report speedily.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensioners

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of take-up by pensioners of (i) income support and (ii) housing benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) on 8 February at column *713*.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of pensioners in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom who are in receipt of retirement pension and income support, for each year since 1981.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 26 June 1989]:* The number of individuals in receipt of both retirement pension and supplementary benefit for each year since 1981 is as follows:

	Scotland (000s)	*Great Britain (000s)*
December 1981	141	1,643
December 1982	140	1,698
December 1983	134	1,565
December 1984	140	1,578
February 1986	137	1,599
May 1987	149	1,620

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiries 1981-1987.

Note: Figures for the United Kingdom are not available. The number of persons in receipt of both retirement pension and income support is not yet available.

Benefit Refusals

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for the Doncaster and Mexborough areas of South Yorkshire all the grounds of refusal of unemployment-related benefits in a manner consistent with the reporting of the chief adjudication officer; and if he will give the number of claims disallowed on each ground for the years 1978, 1983 and 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The grounds of refusal of unemployment-related benefits as listed by the chief adjudication officer in his annual report on adjudication standards are:

Grounds of refusal

1. that the day claimed for is a normal idle day for the employment for which the claimant is registered; that the claimant has worked to the full extent that is normal for that week;
2. that the claimant has left his employment voluntarily;
3. that the claimant has been dismissed from his employment because of misconduct;
4. that the claimant has payment in lieu of notice or remuneration;
5. that the claim to benefit was delayed;
6. that the claimant may not be regarded as unemployed;
7. [1]
8. that the claimant is not available for employment;
9. that the claimant is engaged in employment;
10. that the claimant is placing unreasonable restrictions on his availability for employment;
11. that the claimant has refused suitable employment;
12. that the claimant has terminated a course of training prematurely;
13. that the claimant is claiming for days of a recognised or customary holiday from his employment;
14. that the claimant is a seasonal worker;
15. other categories.

[1] The chief adjudication officer also includes in his list at column 7 "Dependency". This refers to claims made for dependency addition to unemployment benefit and is not a ground for refusal of unemployment benefit.

Notes:

Information about the number of claims for Supplementary Benefit disallowed on each ground is not held for the years 1978 and 1983. Details of Supplementary Benefit an Income Support claims disallowed in 1988 could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Information about the number of disallowed claims for Unemployment Benefit in the Doncaster and Mexborough areas of South Yorkshire is not available. However, the table shows the relevant figures for the Yorkshire and Humberside region, which includes Doncaster and Mexborough.

Disallowed claims for unemployment benefit in the Yorkshire and Humberside region for the years 1978, 1983 and 1988

Question	*1978*	*1983*	*1988*
Normal idle day and full extent normal	157	1,989	3,365
Leaving voluntary	45,958	24,883	25,673
Misconduct	15,674	9,715	8,471
Payment in lieu of notice or remuneration	10,008	23,098	16,041
Delayed claim	2,116	9,612	12,256
Whether unemployed	1,426	5,323	5,441
Dependency benefit	2,207	2,333	533
Availability	2,417	7,948	8,341
Engaged in employment	2,047	19,463	5,204
Restricted availability	459	803	2,212
Refusal of suitable employment	478	158	264
Premature termination of training	38	84	537
Customary holiday	176	1,013	1,169
Seasonal worker	308	363	591
Others	1,597	5,607	5,249
TOTALS	85,066	112,392	95,347

Family Credit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of families now in receipt of family credit living in areas covered by his Department's Social Security offices in *(a)* Doncaster and *(b)* Mexborough; and what were the figures for 12 months ago.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At the end of June 1989 the number of families receiving family credit who, at the time their awards were made, were living in the areas covered by the relevant local social security offices was as follows:

	Number
Doncaster (East)	858
Doncaster (West)	553
Wath-on-Dearne	183

Comparable information for 12 months ago is not available.

Social Fund

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will announce the social fund allocation for the new office in New Malden and also the revised allocation for Kingston following the closure of Surbiton local office on 29 June.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 29 June 1989 a new local office in New Malden opened following the closure of Surbiton local office which also affected the boundaries for Kingston. Accordingly the social fund allocation for Kingston has been adjusted. The revised allocations effective from 29 June 1989 are:

	Loans £	*Grants* £
New Malden	62,213	29,006
Kingston	111,758	52,118

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the average waiting time for claimants' requests for a loan under the social fund to be processed in each social security benefit office in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 23 June 1989]:* The table gives details for budgeting and crisis loans of the average clearance times achieved during May 1989.

Clearance times for loans—Greater Manchester

Office	*Days* [1] *Budget loans*	*Crisis loans*
Farnworth	2·71	2·68
Hyde	2·67	0·81
Manchester (Central)	2·47	0·56
Manchester (Cheetham)	6·55	1·57
Manchester (Chorlton)	15·82	0·62
Manchester (Failsworth)	9·28	1·03
Manchester (Longsight)	8·20	0·60
Manchester (Middleton)	−0·12	1·67
Manchester (Openshaw)	14·01	1·29
Manchester (Rusholme)	16·84	1·45
Manchester (Sale)	11·12	0·32
Manchester (Wythenshawe)	12·13	0·59
Oldham	5·68	0·66
Salford (North)	5·76	0·40
Salford (South)	18·32	0·26
Stockport (North)	6·77	0·27
Stockport (South)	1·20	0·46

[1] The clearance times for budget loans are net figures. These are arrived at by deducting 5 days from the gross clearance time. The 5-day adjustment is a national average figure intended to allow for the time taken by applicants to respond to the offer of a loan.

Hospice Patients

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many questions there are on an income support application form; and how many of them would be relevant to a hospice patient.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Hospice patients will be asked to complete one of two claim forms, depending on their age. These forms contain, on average, some 170 questions. Although every question is relevant to the assessment of entitlement to income support, not all questions will be relevant to individual claimants. Hospice patients or their appointees, like other claimants, will be able to follow the clear signposting throughout the forms which indicate when questions or sections may be missed.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will establish procedures which provide that income support payments for accommodation could be paid directly to hospices when the recipient of the income support is a hospice patient.

Mr. Scott: There are already established procedures for the payment of income support direct to a hospice. These apply when a claimant who is liable for an accommodation charge has fallen into debt due to a failure to budget for that charge, and it is in the best interests of the claimant to make the payment direct.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take steps to amend the regulations so that when hospice patients are awarded income support due to the additional costs, those payments are made from the date of entry to the hospice.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) in the last year for which figures are available, how many hospice patients became entitled to and received income support because of the additional cost of

the hospice; and how many hospice patients continued to receive income support for which they had a previous entitlement;

(2) in the last year for which figures are available, how much income support was paid to hospice patients to help with their hospice costs;

(3) what estimates he has of the number of hospice patients who become eligible for income support on entering a hospice but do not receive it because they die before their claim is prepared and processed;

(4) what information he has on the proportion of hospice costs that are met by income support payments to hospice patients.

Mr. Scott: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. Income support is paid to terminally ill people according to the type of care they are receiving, and no distinction is made between hospices and nursing homes.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has for speeding up the process of application for income support for hospice patients.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are no plans at present to institute special procedures for people claiming income support from hospices. The process of application for income support is designed to gather the required information to allow for the accurate assessment of benefit entitlement and payment in all cases, wherever the claimant is resident.

Income Support Forms

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated average time required to complete an income support application form.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No estimates have been made.

Mrs. S. E. Hart

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to pay Mrs. S. E. Hart of 21 Greenswood road, Brixham, Devon, the benefits, including widowed mother's allowance and child benefit, to which she is entitled, dating from 16 August 1983.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Mrs. Hart did not claim widow's benefit until 1988. That claim was backdated to 28 July 1987, the maximum period allowed under legislation. The position for the period before that is still being investigated and we will write to my hon. Friend as soon as these investigations are completed.

Mrs. Hart was in receipt of child benefit and one parent benefit from 1983 until her younger child left school.

Disabled Persons

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out in detail the benefits including telephone, travel, car, rates, etc., from public funds available to a registered disabled person over 90 years of age in receipt of a combined state and private pension totalling £68 per week; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The help available to a registered disabled person will vary according to the individual's needs and circumstances, and it is not possible to give the information requested. If my hon. Friend has a particular case in mind, he may wish to write to me so that the relevant details can be provided.

Child Benefit

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received from British citizens, temporarily absent from the United Kingdom but liable to pay income tax in the United Kingdom, that their children should remain entitled to child benefit during their absence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There have been no recent representations.

People temporarily absent solely because they are in employment outside Great Britain can receive child benefit if at least half their earnings from their employment are liable to United Kingdom income tax.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to what he ascribes the fact that the staff effort required to process each application to the housing benefit transitional payments unit was three times as great as had been expected.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 3 July at column *40-41*.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will instruct the housing benefit transitional payments unit to accept late applications.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Late applications will be considered by the transitional payments unit if there are good reasons for the delay.

Single Parents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will introduce measures to enable single mothers to compel financial support from the fathers concerned who are unwilling to make voluntary contributions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Arrangements for single mothers to obtain maintenance orders for their children are the responsibility of the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Home Office. Two measures introduced this year will enable more mothers to obtain maintenance. First, the time limit for starting proceedings has been abolished, and second, DNA testing is available to determine paternity where it is in dispute.

When a mother claims income support the Department tries to obtain a contribution from the father, and can take proceedings if he refuses to make payments which he can afford. However, the Government are concerned that more fathers should meet their responsibility to support their children. We have therefore introduced revised procedures to make this work more effective.

Council House Tenants

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has as to the additional level of benefit entitlement *(a)* single and *(b)* married

council tenants would receive if their only source of income was the basic state retirement pension, based on the average council house rent and rates in *(a)* England *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 26 May 1989]:* Information is not available in the exact form requested. However, taking the average council house rent and rates in England and Wales for people with no dependent children, additional income-related benefit for people whose only income is the basic state retirement pension, is set out in the tables.

Table A. Until October 1989

	England and Wales			
	Basic RP	*Income support*	*Rent rebate*	*Rate rebate*
	£	£	£	£
Single pensioner aged less than 80	43·60	2·50	17·90	6·32
Single pensioner aged 80 or over	43·85	4·75	17·90	6·32
Pensioner couple, both aged less than 80	69·80	2·05	17·90	6·32
Pensioner couple, both aged 80 or over	70·30	4·00	17·90	6·32
Table B. From October 1989				
Single pensioner aged less than 75	43·60	2·50	17·90	6·32
Single pensioner aged 75 to 79	43·60	5·00	17·90	6·32
Single pensioner aged 80 or over	43·85	7·25	17·90	6·32
Pensioner couple, both aged less than 75	69·80	2·05	17·90	6·32
Pensioner couple, at least one aged 75 to 79	69·80	5·55	17·90	6·32
Pensioner couple, both aged 80 or over	70·30	7·50	17·90	6·32

Notes:
1. For the pensioner couples it is assumed that the wife's retirement pension is based on her husband's contributions.
2. No savings over £3,000: no non-dependants; no ineligible items included in rent and rates.
3. From October 1989, an additional pensioner premium will be in force in both housing benefit and income support. This will increase IS entitlement by up to £2·50 a week for single pensioners and £3·50 for couples.
4. All the examples show people entitled to income support. They are, therefore, entitled to maximum housing benefit, which is 100 per cent. of eligible rent and 80 per cent. of eligible rates.

Loans and Community Care Grants

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, pursuant to his answers to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East of 25 May, *Official Report*, column *683*, and 12 June, *Official Report*, columns *282-83*, he will list the percentages of *(a)* budgeting loans and *(b)* community care grants which were awarded to each of the 15 client groups defined by his Department for each of the 21 offices serving the West Midlands county area for the financial year 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 26 June 1989]:* The information requested in set out in the table for 23 offices in the West Midlands county area (excluding Coventry). The relevant information for the Coventry offices is given in my reply to the hon. Member on 15 June at columns *531-32*.

Budgeting loans and community care grants for west Midlands county area percentage by client group 1988-89

Per cent.

	(00)	*(01)*	*(02)*	*(03)*	*(04)*	*(05)*	*(06)*	*(07)*	*(08)*	*(09)*	*(10)*	*(11)*	*(12)*	*(13)*	*(14)*	*(15)*[1]
Birmingham (Bradford St)																
Budgeting Loans	0·00	0·52	0·94	5·22	0·52	3·66	4·60	41·00	1·46	2·51	15·46	18·29	0·84	4·28	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·00	3·43	4·00	16·00	1·14	6·29	10·86	25·14	1·71	1·14	5·14	12·57	1·71	10·29	0·00	0·57
Birmingham (Edgbaston)																
Budgeting Loans	0·47	0·66	0·47	4·28	0·33	2·44	3·01	45·04	0·24	1·69	12·60	24·21	0·47	4·04	0·04	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·19	4·46	3·29	10·66	0·58	1·55	7·17	23·26	0·19	1·94	4·07	33·72	0·97	6·59	0·00	1·36
Birmingham (Erdington)																
Budgeting Loans	0·43	0·28	0·24	3·79	0·09	2·18	1·52	43·34	0·81	2·46	12·46	27·85	0·76	3·79	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·15	3·90	3·15	18·17	0·45	2·85	5·56	26·43	0·30	1·35	7·66	21·77	1·50	5·41	0·00	1·35
Birmingham (Handsworth)																
Budgeting Loans	0·21	0·46	0·21	3·42	0·25	2·25	2·71	46·77	0·92	3·50	8·17	27·01	0·50	3·63	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·00	3·20	1·71	15·14	0·85	1·71	11·51	21·96	0·43	2·13	5·33	24·52	2·56	8·74	0·00	0·21
Birmingham (Ladywood)																
Budgeting Loans	0·00	0·17	0·34	5·16	0·11	1·76	4·03	44·41	0·79	2·84	12·76	23·60	0·74	3·29	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·17	4·74	3·38	15·06	1·18	1·52	7·78	21·83	0·68	0·51	5·92	25·89	1·18	9·48	0·00	1·02
Birmingham (Northfield)																
Budgeting Loans	0·45	0·35	0·15	2·60	0·15	3·00	2·50	42·54	0·65	1·50	16·72	26·06	0·30	3·05	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·00	10·22	2·16	28·49	1·01	1·29	9·64	20·29	0·43	0·43	6·19	12·81	0·72	3·74	0·00	2·59
Birmingham (Perry Barr)																
Budgeting Loans	0·30	0·00	0·30	3·65	0·30	2·74	2·66	48·02	1·44	3·50	19·98	14·21	0·91	1·98	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·82	4·89	4·35	26·63	0·27	3·26	12·50	17·39	0·00	1·63	6·52	11·14	3·26	6·52	0·00	0·82

	(00)	(01)	(02)	(03)	(04)	(05)	(06)	(07)	(08)	(09)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)[1]
Birmingham (Ravenhurst)																
Budgeting Loans	0·11	0·11	0·34	5·67	0·23	2·95	5·22	36·96	0·91	3·85	10·09	26·98	1·13	5·44	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·35	3·85	3·50	12·94	0·70	1·40	8·74	22·73	1·05	0·70	5·24	19·58	3·15	14·34	0·00	1·75
Birmingham (South Yardley)																
Budgeting Loans	0·28	0·68	0·40	3·86	0·40	2·50	2·21	49·72	0·68	1·93	20·77	13·45	0·68	2·44	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·27	8·75	4·91	22·41	1·72	3·32	12·07	24·01	0·13	0·93	7·16	7·96	1·99	3·45	0·00	0·93
Birmingham (Sparkhill)																
Budgeting Loans	0·80	0·32	0·96	5·57	0·16	2·55	5·25	44·43	0·96	2·39	14·01	16·88	1·11	4·62	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·43	4·27	5·13	11·54	0·85	3·42	8·12	26·92	0·43	0·85	9·83	14·1	3·42	8·97	0·00	1·17
Birmingham (Washwood Heath)																
Budgeting Loans	0·54	0·42	0·06	3·27	0·12	2·50	2·26	48·22	0·48	2·62	18·31	16·94	1·07	3·21	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·21	6·18	4·05	22·60	0·21	1·92	11·51	19·40	0·43	2·35	8·32	14·50	1·71	5·97	0·00	0·64
Cannock																
Budgeting Loans	0·99	0·14	0·99	3·67	0·28	2·96	2·68	39·63	1·55	4·51	26·52	13·40	1·41	1·27	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·56	0·56	6·70	11·17	0·56	3·91	3·91	30·73	1·68	1·68	17·32	11·73	4·47	4·47	0·00	0·56
Dudley North																
Budgeting Loans	0·22	0·22	0·39	5·07	0·33	2·04	2·65	36·55	1·27	2·43	24·37	19·74	1·54	3·20	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·00	1·85	2·15	12·31	0·00	1·85	6·77	22·15	0·31	0·62	12·62	30·15	4·00	4·31	0·00	0·92
Dudley South																
Budgeting Loans	0·16	0·33	0·00	4·45	0·00	1·15	1·98	39·87	0·99	3·62	24·22	18·45	0·99	3·79	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·00	5·11	2·84	22·73	0·57	0·00	2·27	22·16	0·00	1·14	5·68	28·41	2·84	5·68	0·00	0·57
Lichfield																
Budgeting Loans	0·00	0·00	0·46	2·87	0·69	1·83	1·83	45·64	1·26	1·95	25·80	14·68	0·46	2·52	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·39	3·53	4·31	18·04	1·57	3·53	8·63	23·14	0·78	3·53	14·12	10·59	3·53	3·92	0·00	0·39
Nuneaton																
Budgeting Loans	0·30	0·10	0·81	3·25	0·51	3·05	2·84	51·07	0·61	1·42	17·36	14·62	0·91	3·15	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·93	2·80	2·80	14·02	0·47	3·27	11·68	19·63	0·93	2·80	14·02	16·36	3·74	5·14	0·00	1·40
Redditch																
Budgeting Loans	0·18	0·53	0·53	5·35	1·07	4·63	1·07	52·41	0·71	3·03	17·29	11·59	0·36	1·25	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·30	16·91	4·75	46·88	0·89	1·78	5·64	9·79	0·89	0·59	4·15	4·45	−0·30	2·67	0·00	0·59
Smethwick																
Budgeting Loans	0·57	0·63	0·00	3·54	0·06	2·22	1·71	47·09	0·89	1·96	18·61	20·06	0·32	2·34	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·54	7·24	6·70	15·55	0·27	1·07	8·04	24·93	1·34	2·14	5·90	21·18	0·54	3·22	0·00	1·34
Walsall East																
Budgeting Loans	0·36	0·44	0·98	3·29	0·18	3·20	2·49	37·24	0·53	2·93	29·96	14·22	1·16	3·02	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·00	7·22	5·56	23·61	0·56	5·28	13·06	15·56	0·28	0·83	9·17	8·89	2·22	6·39	0·00	1·39
Walsall West																
Budgeting Loans	0·41	0·21	0·96	5·08	0·41	2·54	3·85	41·28	1·37	2·75	20·88	16·07	0·96	3·23	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·23	5·96	5·05	12·61	0·69	5·28	8·03	34·40	0·69	1·83	8·72	12·16	1·61	1·61	0·00	1·15
West Bromwich																
Budgeting Loans	0·24	0·00	0·12	3·80	0·24	1·31	1·31	38·52	1·66	2·73	28·43	18·04	1·13	2·49	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·00	9·70	8·02	33·89	1·03	4·66	12·55	8·67	0·52	3·36	4·53	6·60	1·68	4·01	0·00	0·78
Wolverhampton North																
Budgeting Loans	0·12	0·47	0·39	2·87	0·27	2·37	1·98	44·41	0·78	3·07	22·59	18·01	0·50	2·17	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	0·00	4·78	3·19	15·47	0·64	2·55	11·16	25·84	0·32	1·28	5·58	21·05	2·23	5·74	0·00	0·16
Wolverhampton South																
Budgeting Loans	0·11	0·63	0·63	5·43	0·11	1·95	1·95	38·83	0·84	3·90	18·81	22·76	0·79	3·27	0·00	n/a
Community Care Grants	1·13	2·48	2·26	12·42	0·23	3·84	8·13	29·57	0·45	1·58	7·90	16·93	4·74	8·35	0·00	0·00

[1] *Key to client groups*

Code	*Meaning*
00	unallocated or unidentified
01	over 80—with income support higher pensioner premium
02	aged 60-79—disabled with higher pensioner premium
03	aged 60-79—with ordinary pensioner premium, or over 60 without pensioner premium
04	lone parent with income support disability premium
05	family with disability premium
06	other with disability premium
07	lone parent without disability premium
08	signs at UBO quarterly with income support family premium
09	signs at UBO quarterly without family premium
10	signing unemployed or with training allowance with family premium
11	signing unemployed or with training allowance without family premium

12 others with family premium
13 others without family premium
14 involved in trade dispute
15 applicant not in receipt of income support—not applicable for budgeting loans

SOCIAL SECURITY

War Pensions (Housing Benefit)

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will review his policy in relation to war pensions and housing benefit so that local authorities which disregard war pensions when making their assessment would be recompensed from central funds;

(2) what is his estimate of the savings to public funds which he makes by not disregarding war pensions when housing benefit is assessed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 4 July 1989]:* When assessing housing benefit local authorities must statutorily disregard £5 of a war widow's pension or a war disablement pension. They receive direct subsidy for the housing benefit arising from this normal calculation.

Where local authorities operate local schemes by which they disregard further amounts of war pensions, the resulting extra housing benefit does not qualify for housing benefit subsidy. The balance is a charge on local rate or community charge payers.

It is estimated that the cost of disregarding war pensions in full would increase public expenditure on housing benefit and community charge benefit by some £40 million. However, support is reflected in the rate support grant for the discretionary schemes operated by local authorities. The resulting net cost of about £30 million would be of very little benefit to the poorest war pensioners, but give considerable extra sums to some who are relatively well off.

Ms. N. Hinchcliffe

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the appeal (CSB1605188) to the Social Security Commissioner on a point of law over the refusal of a single payment for bedding lodged on 21 May 1987 in respect of Ms. N. Hinchcliffe will be heard.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

A Commissioner made a determination in this case on 28 June 1989 and copies of that determination were sent to the parties on 30 June 1989. The Commissioner made his determination on the papers, no oral hearing having been requested.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many visits there have been by the Health and Safety Executive to employment training *(a)* projects and *(b)* work placements since its inception in September 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: Health and Safety Executive records do not separately identify inspection to workplaces where employment training participants are present. For the purposes of health and safety legislation, employment training participants have all the same rights and duties as employees.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to encourage more private employers to provide employment training work placements.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department through its marketing campaigns, and training managers through their local contacts, continue to forge links with employers to make them aware of the advantages of ET and to encourage them to offer training opportunities.

Repetitive Strain Injury

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Oxford, East on 4 April, *Official Report*, column *38*, when he expects the Health and Safety Executive to conclude its investigation into repetitive strain injury.

Mr. Nicholls: The main results of the project investigating repetitive strain injury at the Institute of Occupational Medicine in Edinburgh were published by the institute in January 1989. I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library. A small follow-up study of keyboard operators is still in progress and it is hoped that the results will be available in September this year. The project at the university of Birmingham is also expected to report this September.

VDU Operators

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to respond to the recommendations of the Health and Safety Executive in respect of the health and safety of visual display unit operators.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive has not made any recent recommendations on this subject.

Employment Rehabilitation Centres

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on 14 June, *Official Report*, column *436*, he will list the factors which have caused the proportion of expenditure on employment rehabilitation centres reimbursed by the European social fund to fall from 42 per cent. in 1985 to 13 per cent. in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* The main factors underlying this reduction have been a growth in the total volume of claims on the fund by all member states, resulting in the progressive scaling down of the proportion of successful United Kingdom claims, and changes in the eligibility rules.

SCOTLAND

National Health Service Reform

18. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the hospitals which have expressed an interest in opting out.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have not yet asked hospitals to make any formal expressions of interest in becoming self-governing. I shall be doing so shortly at the same time as I issue more detailed information on what is involved.

47. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received supporting the opting out of hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have received a number of representations on this subject. Many support our aims but have raised questions on points of detail. I shall be issuing further guidance shortly.

42. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hospitals he expects to show interest in opting out.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The White Paper indicates that we expect at least two hospitals to become self-governing by 1992.

33. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce the first hospital to opt out of health board control.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The White Paper "Working for Patients" and the Scottish working paper 3 on "Self-Governing Hospitals" made it clear that we hope to establish at least two self-governing hospitals by 1992.

29. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions he has given to health boards concerning opt-out hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No instructions have been given to health boards. Scottish working paper 3 "Self-Governing Hospitals" gave information on self-governing status. I shall issue more detailed guidance shortly, inviting those who wish to explore this possibility to express their interest to me.

COSLA

20. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement with regard to the issues which he expects to raise at the next meeting between himself and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend and I met representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on Monday 3 July, when they let us have their views on the revenue support grant settlement for 1990-91 and other related matters.

I hope to meet the convention again in the autumn to discuss grant distribution, and such other matters as may by then be appropriate.

CBI

21. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the Confederation of British Industry in Scotland; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend and I are in frequent touch with the Confederation of British Industry in Scotland on matters affecting the Scottish economy and industry. We look forward to a continuing exchange of views.

Unemployment

22. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the fall in unemployment in Scotland over the last 12 months.

46. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the underlying trend in unemployment in Scotland over the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: In Scotland, the number of unemployed claimants has fallen by 45,000 over the past 12 months and by almost 90,000 in the last two years. Unemployment has now fallen for 25 months in succession and is now at its lowest level for eight years.

Business Rates

23. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many responses he has had from the business community in Scotland following his speech on business rates in Glasgow on 8 May.

Mr. Lang: Representatives of 13 business organisations have written to my right hon. and learned Friend. All have welcomed his announcement warmly.

AIDS

24. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of prisoners in penal establishments in Scotland who have been diagnosed as suffering from AIDS or are carriers of the disease; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The most recent survey, conducted on 20 April 1989, showed that six inmates in Scottish penal establishments were suffering from AIDS or AIDS-related complex, and 70 were known to be HIV positive. These figures are comparable with those obtained from surveys conducted during 1988, and are monitored on a regular basis.

Crash Barriers

25. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in the installation of crash barriers on Scottish dual carriageways.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: By the end of this financial year at least 90 km, 39 per cent., of the trunk road motorway network and 143 km, 33 per cent., of trunk road dual carriageways will be equipped with central reserve safety fences or will not require such provision due to the wide separation of the carriageways.

High-Rise Flats

26. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to provide extra finance for improving high-rise flats.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: For 1989-90 we have made available £474 million for capital investment in local authority houses; this is an increase of £28·8 million or 6·5 per cent. on the resources announced in March last year. It is for individual authorities as landlords to determine their own policies and priorities for their housing stock and to draw up capital programmes for investment, including any plans for work on high-rise flats.

Drug Abuse

27. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what special resources he plans to make available to the police and appropriate agencies in order to alleviate the social problems which emanate from drug abuse in the city of Glasgow.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government's strategy to combat drug misuse and the specific measures that are being taken are described in the publication "Tackling Drug Misuse—A Summary of the Government's Strategy" (Third Edition, 1988), copies of which are in the Library.

The deployment of police resources is a matter for chief constables. Strathclyde police attaches a very high priority to tackling drug misuse. Since 1979 the force's drug squad, which is based at Glasgow, has been increased from 18 to 34 officers. In addition, since 1986 we have authorised increases totalling 31 officers in the strength of the Scottish crime squad to allow the formation of drugs wings, one of which is based at Glasgow.

As for other agencies, the sum allocated to Greater Glasgow health board for the support of drug misuse services in 1989-90 is £466,861. In addition, from 1989-90 we are making available to health boards generally a further £1 million per annum for the development of these services. The provision of such services is, however, primarily the responsibility of health boards and local authorities.

Electricity Bills

28. **Mr. Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland under what authority the South of Scotland electricity board demands repayment of electricity bills which have been estimated due to faulty meters.

Mr. Lang: The South of Scotland electricity board, in accordance with the provisions of the Electricity Supply Acts 1882 to 1936 and the schedule to the Electric Lighting (Clauses) Act 1899, or on the basis of contract, is entitled to charge for electricity which it supplies. In addition, the board relies in appropriate circumstances on section 51 of the South of Scotland Electricity Order Confirmation Act 1956, as amended, for recovery of damage caused to meters. Assessed accounts are issued to seek payment for a supply of electricity which is unrecorded because of a faulty or damaged meter, in accordance with the board's conditions for supply of electricity, and the board has confirmed that this approach has found acceptance in the courts. Moreover, the board has a clear responsibility to seek payment in this way since otherwise the cost would be borne by the general body of its consumers.

Community Charge

30. **Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has recently received regarding the impact of the standard community charge in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

36. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the standard community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of such representations.

53. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many changes have been made to the poll tax register in the Strathclyde region since the beginning of 1989.

Mr. Lang: It is the responsibility of community charge registration officers to maintain the community charge registers and the information requested is not held centrally.

39. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of those required to register for the community charge in Scotland have done so; and what percentage of those liable to pay the charge have begun to make payments.

Mr. Lang: It is estimated that almost 99 per cent. of the adult population has been registered. It will be some while before reliable information becomes available from local authorities on payment levels.

Tourism

31. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of tourists from England who visit Scotland; what percentage this is of the total number of visitors to Scotland; and how much they contribute to Scotland's economy.

35. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many tourists visited Scotland over the last 10 years; and what percentage of the total number originated from England.

Mr. Lang: Information for the most recent years for which final figures are available is set out in the following table.

Year	*Domestic and Overseas Visitors to Scotland (millions)*	*Visitors to Scotland from England (millions)*	*Visitors from England as percentage of total*	*£ million expenditure by Visitors from England*
1978	13·2	4·76	36	n/a
1979	12·5	4·72	36	n/a
1980	12·7	4·19	33	n/a
1981	13·0	4·60	35	n/a
1982	13·4	4·20	31	n/a
1983	14·1	5·90	47	n/a
1984	14·2	5·90	42	756
1985	13·7	5·80	42	709
1986	13·2	5·94	45	775
1987	14·8	6·71	45	1,000

Source:

For domestic visitors, 'British Home Tourism Survey' for period 1978-1983 and 'National Survey of Tourism in Scotland' for the period 1984-1987.

For overseas visitors, 'International Passenger Survey' 1978-1987.

Gaelic Television

32. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met with Comunn na Gaidhlig to discuss Gaelic television.

Mr. Rifkind: I met representatives of Comunn na Gaidhlig on 17 April to discuss their views on the future of Gaelic broadcasting. My officials have had a further meeting with the council since then.

Development Agency

34. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total expenditure by the Scottish Development Agency since its inception.

Mr. Lang: Taking account of provisional expenditure for 1988-89, the Scottish Development Agency had spent at the end of March a total of £1,304 million in the period since it was formed.

37. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the Scottish Development Agency; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply by my right hon. and learned Friend to the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) earlier today.

Local Councillors

38. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received concerning the practice of local councillors holding local authority employment in local authorities in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Thirty-four of those who responded to consultation about the Widdicombe report expressed views on this subject, as did seven of those who commented on the Government's response to that report or on the relevant provisions in the Local Government and Housing Bill. In addition, two individuals have made representations about the way in which they would be affected by those provisions.

Deep Coal Mining

40. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the impact on the Scottish economy of the run down in the deep coal mining industry.

Mr. Lang: The Government are continuing to keep the situation in the deep coal mining industry, including the impact of the rundown on the Scottish economy, under close review.

Forestry

41. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what impact the recent tax changes relating to the forestry industry have had upon the levels of tree planting.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to him on 9 May 1989, *Official Report*, column *332*.

Local Government Services

43. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further progress local authorities in Scotland are making with regard to contracting out of local government services.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities remain fully engaged in implementing the competition provisions of the Local Government Act 1988. The first round of work won in competition has to be under way by 1 August this year with further rounds by 1 January and 1 August in subsequent years.

From the information available it would appear that so far local authorities have themselves been winning contracts in most cases. Where any anti-competitive practice has been alleged my officials are following up the cases with the local authorities concerned.

New Towns

44. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future of the Scottish new towns.

Mr. Lang: The Government have now completed their consideration of the issues affecting the future of the Scottish new towns, and our conclusions and proposals will be set out in a White Paper within the next few weeks.

General Practitioner

45. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the increase in the number of general practitioners since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of general medical practitioners in Scotland has risen from 2,921 in 1979 to 3,353 (provisional) in 1988. The corresponding figures for general dental practitioners are 1,204 and 1,523 (provisional).

Hospital Waiting Lists

48. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement on the waiting lists for *(a)* hip, *(b)* ear, nose and throat, and *(c)* varicose vein operations in Scottish hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Waiting list figures are not collected centrally for individual types of operation, but the all-Scotland waiting lists in the relevant specialties of orthopaedic, ENT and general surgery fell by 6 per cent., 15 per cent. and 7 per cent. respectively between March and September 1988. In Lanarkshire the reductions were 13 per cent., 27 per cent. and 28 per cent. respectively. Our wide-ranging waiting list initiatives in 1988-89 have made a substantial contribution to these reductions and the allocation of £3 million helped health boards to treat an extra 8,800 inpatients in the year to March 1989. For 1989-90 I have already allocated £6·5 million of the £7 million which I made available and health boards have set themselves a target to see or treat an extra 26,000 outpatients, 17,250 inpatients and 1,800 day cases. This is in addition to the action which boards themselves are continuing to take to increase the number of patients treated. The biggest allocations have been for orthopaedic and general surgery.

Employment Prospects

49. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to visit Glasgow, Rutherglen constituency to discuss employment prospects.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to visit the Glasgow, Rutherglen constituency.

Inward Investment

50. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Government's performance regarding the attraction of inward investment to Scotland since 1979.

Mr. Lang: Since 1979 Scotland has enjoyed very significant success as a location for inward investment thanks to Government policies which have re-established the United Kingdom as a place in which enterprise is welcome and can flourish, and to the effectiveness of the one-door approach to inward investment operated by Locate in Scotland since it was set up in 1981.

Fishing Industry

51. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to give immediate aid to the Scottish fishing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Current difficulties in the fishing industry reflect the inevitable consequences of having to cut quotas to secure future stocks and prosperity. It would not be appropriate to provide any immediate financial aid to the industry which has had several successful years under the common fisheries policy.

Nirex

52. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met senior officials from Nirex; and what was discussed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend and the Secretary of State for the Environment met officials of the executive on 15 March 1989 to discuss their report to the Government on sites for investigation for the deep disposal of low and intermediate-level radioactive wastes.

Business Grants

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many companies in receipt of a cash grant from his Department to establish a business in Scotland have discontinued such business within five years of establishment.

Mr. Lang: Information in the form requested is not available. However, it is possible to provide some figures for companies which have received regional selective assistance. Since the introduction of the current guidelines for RSA in November 1984, eight companies which received RSA towards establishing new businesses in Scotland are known to have discontinued such business. These companies receive some £346,000. Recovery of grant is pursued in appropriate cases. By comparison, there have been 91 projects in total which have received RSA to establish new businesses in Scotland over the same period, with associated grant payments to date of £19·2 million.

Football Matches (Arrests)

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the figures of football-related arrests for all Scottish clubs *(a)* for the seasons 1987-88 and 1988-89 and *(b)* as a percentage of total attendances at football matches during those seasons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information set out in the table relates to arrests within Scottish league grounds at league and cup matches.

Season	*Number of arrests*	*Percentage of attendance*
1987-88	845	0·0163
1988-89	806	0·0169

Central Legal Office

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he or any of his health board general managers has made any proposals for the services provided by the central legal office to be put out to competitive tendering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At the request of the Scottish Home and Health Department, the Common Services Agency, of which the central legal office is part, will shortly put out to tender certain conveyancing and related work.

Consultancy Fees

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each financial year since 1983-84 the amount spent by each health board on consultancy fees at 1983-84 constant prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available from the annual accounts of health boards relates to the total of

fees paid by health boards to management consultants, legal firms, other than for legal expenses connected with compensation claims, and to work study consultants. The amounts for each health board are shown in the table. Expenditure for 1984-85 onwards has been converted to 1983-84 prices using the gross domestic product deflator.

£ at 1983-84 prices

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	[1]*1988-89*
Argyll and Clyde	2,839	861	19,255	48,086	16,300	53,100
Ayrshire and Arran	—	8,159	30,329	6,161	7,475	24,897
Borders	1,537	748	12,585	1,763	4,546	12,076
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	4,395	2,447	31,567	47,536
Fife	16,464	20,503	11,195	22,142	28,814	47,964
Forth Valley	755	3,026	20,690	22,976	36,805	52,487
Grampian	6,490	1,553	13,880	81,716	138,589	33,039
Greater Glasgow	—	6,293	3,462	[2]−1,081	40,725	199,630
Highland	—	424	2,626	16,754	10,789	82,311
Lanarkshire	—	3,835	113	—	2,495	20,618
Lothian	2,912	1,575	12,573	72,994	71,566	134,089
Orkney	460	—	1,479	564	1,499	13,579
Shetland	72	1,164	1,196	1,260	1,499	4,194
Tayside	—	—	55	223	50,293	11,436
Western Isles	2,000	—	13	1,939	9,238	22,142
Totals	33,529	48,141	133,846	277,944	452,200	759,098

[1] Provisional.
[2] Net of credits.

Elderly People (Long-term Care)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the proposed provision of long-term care for the elderly at Rutherglen hospital by Takare plc was put out to competitive tendering.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Greater Glasgow health board has not made any final decision on the provision of long-term care for the elderly in the south-east of Glasgow.

Additionality

8. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 3 May, *Official Report*, column *163*, what were the rules on additionality under *(a)* regulation No. 724/75, *(b)* regulation No. 1787/84 and *(c)* regulation No. 4253/88; and what steps he is taking to ensure genuine additionality at the regional level, in accordance with article 9 of regulation 4253/88.

Mr. Lang: Article 9 of regulation 4253/88 calls for the increase in the size of the European Community structural funds to have a genuine additional economic impact in the regions concerned and to result in at least an equivalent increase in the total of public structural aid in the member state concerned. There were no analagous articles in the previous regulations, but they contained provisions about grants supplementing or partially reimbursing national aids.

The impact of the funds in Scotland is clear. Grants are paid to a wide range of local authorities and other bodies, saving them up to 50 per cent. of the cost of qualifying projects. This will continue to be the case, as it has been in the past.

Glenochil Prison (Security Equipment)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the value of security and surveillance equipment supplied to Her Majesty's prison Glenochil and attached establishments in the years 1986 to 1989 to the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: From 1 April 1986 to 31 March 1989 the sum spent on security and surveillance equipment in Her Majesty's prison Glenochil was £59,416·14. Over the same period the sum of £650,181·20 was spent on such equipment specifically for other establishments run by the Scottish prison service.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the procedures for ordering security and surveillance equipment at Her Majesty's prison Glenochil and attached establishments; what were these procedures in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Home and Health Department has a central purchasing policy for security and surveillance equipment to be acquired through its prison building division. The procedures involve multiple tendering. These procedures apply to all establishments and were in force in 1986. In exceptional circumstances, single tender action can be implemented provided that it complies with the rules of public accounting.

Princes Street (Traffic Regulations)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the proposal of Lothian regional council to amend traffic regulations on Princes street, Edinburgh; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under schedule 9, part II of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, my right hon. and learned Friend is considering Lothian regional council's proposals to facilitate the flow of vehicular traffic on Princes street, Edinburgh, by increasing the restricted hours for waiting, loading and unloading to 24 hours of every day and the prohibited hours to 8 am to 6 pm of every day subsequent to the widening of the north footway. The order includes provisions to facilitate orange badge holders' parking in streets adjacent to Princes street following the removal of the present facility to park on Princes street as a result of footway widening and additional waiting restrictions.

Thirteen representations have been received on this subject. These fall broadly into three categories: (a) objections from disabled people about the exclusion of

orange badge holders from Princes street; (b) objections from traders in Princes street about loading/unloading difficulties; (c) objections from people anticipating the possible future complete pedestrianisation of Princes street.

Full consideration is being given to all the representations I have received. I hope to give my decision soon.

Red List Substances (Salmon Farming)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what resources are being made available to the river purification boards to enable them to fulfil their duty to monitor red list substances including dichlorous in the light of the growth rate of the salmon farming industry.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for each river purification board to set annual expenditure in line with its duties, including those relating to the proposed red list, and the necessary resources are obtained by requisition on the regional councils whose areas lie wholly or partly in the area of the board.

British Steel

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of British Steel; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend met the chairman of British Steel on 26 October 1988. A number of matters of current interest were discussed.

Community Charge

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the operation of the standard community charge.

Mr. Rifkind: I have received a number of such representations.

Prisons (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has considered the report by Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons for Scotland into conditions and arrangements for accommodating persons detained in Scottish prisons under the Immigration Act 1971 and members of ethnic minority groups.

Mr. Rifkind: I am today publishing my statement in response to this report. Copies of both are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Torness

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the estimated annual marginal costs to the Scottish electricity boards in 1989-90 of generating the equivalent output of Torness by burning Scottish coal in existing Scottish power stations.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 4 July 1989]:* Information on the Scottish electricity boards' estimated generation costs for the current financial year is commercially sensitive and confidential to the boards.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the estimated annual interest charges to the Scottish electricity boards from the construction of Torness nuclear power station.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 4 July 1989]:* The Scottish electricity boards' total assets are financed by a combination of internally generated funds, borrowings and current liabilities, none of which attaches to individual assets. It is therefore not possible to attribute specific loans or interest charges to Torness nuclear power station.

Shipbuilding (Redundancies)

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of redundancies in the shipbuilding and shiprepair industries in Strathclyde during the period 1 January 1979 to 31 December 1988.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* Information is not available in the precise form requested. There are no comprehensive statistics on redundancies. The number of redundancies involving 10 or more workers confirmed to the Department of Employment—the Training Agency —as having occurred in Strathclyde region in the shipbuilding and shiprepairing industry between 1 January 1979 and 31 December 1988 was 11,303.

Central Excavations Unit

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have been employed by the Scottish Development Department's central excavations unit and its successor body on short-term contracts for periods of more than two years; and why such people have not been offered full-time employment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 June 1989]:* In the four years 1985-86 to 1988-89 there have been no contracts of more than two years. No individual contract has been for more than 156 working days, and only five contracts have been for more than 100 working days.

Information on contracts before 1985 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 6 July 1989

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tax and Price Index

14. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the most recent figure for the tax and price index.

135. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the most recent figure for the tax and price index.

178. **Mr. George:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the most recent figure for the tax and price index.

195. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the most recent figure for the tax and price index.

Mr. Lilley: The tax and price index increased by 8·4 per cent. over the twelve months to May.

Self-Employment

15. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in self-employment since 1979.

25. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in self-employment since 1979.

77. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in self-employment since 1979.

Mr. Major: Self-employment in the United Kingdom has increased by 1,142,000, or 60 per cent. since June 1979.

Balance of Trade

16. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast of the balance of trade in visible goods in 1989 and 1990.

169. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast of the balance of trade in visible goods in 1989 and 1990.

186. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast of the balance of trade in visible goods in 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast of the balance of trade in visible goods in 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Major: The latest forecast of the visible trade balance in 1989 was published in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" for 1989-90. An updated forecast for 1989, together with a forecast of the visible trade balance in 1990, will be published in the Autumn Statement in the usual way.

106. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will next provide a forecast for the United Kingdom balance of payments in 1989 and 1990.

117. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will next provide a forecast for the United Kingdom balance of payments in 1989 and 1990.

121. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will revise his forecast for the United Kingdom balance of payments in 1989 and 1990.

148. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will revise his forecast for the United Kingdom's balance of payments in 1989 and 1990.

157. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will next provide a forecast for the United Kingdom balance of payments in 1989 and 1990.

161. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he will next provide a forecast for the United Kingdom balance of payments in 1989 and 1990.

184. **Ms Abbott:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will revise his forecast for the United Kingdom balance of payments in 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Major: A forecast of the balance of payments will be published as usual in the next Autumn Statement.

76. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the revised figure for the balance of payments in the first quarter of 1989.

129. **Mr. Adams:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the revised figure for the balance of payments in the first quarter of 1989.

192. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the revised figure for the balance of payments in the first quarter of 1989.

Mr. Major: Latest estimates for the first quarter of 1989 show a current account deficit of £4·8 billion, an improvement of £0·8 billion over the preceding quarter.

62. **Mr. Rees:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will revise his forecast for the United Kingdom balance of payments in 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Lawson: A forecast of the balance of payments will be published as usual in the next Autumn Statement.

48. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for the United Kingdom's balance of trade in manufactured goods for 1989.

52. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast of the balance of trade in manufacturing in 1989 and 1990.

73. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast of the balance of trade in manufacturing in 1989 and 1990.

87. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast of the balance of trade in manufacturing in 1989 and 1990.

111. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast of the balance of trade in manufacturing in 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Major: The "Financial Statement and Budget Report" for 1989-90 provides a forecast of the balance of trade in manufactures for 1989 only. For this forecast, I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 8 June at column *204*.

42. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss the balance of trade deficit.

Mr. Lawson: I meet the Governor from time to time to discuss a variety of matters.

168. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the revised figure for the balance of payments in the first quarter of 1989.

Mr. Lawson: Latest estimates for the first quarter of 1989 show a seasonally adjusted current account deficit of £4·8 billion, an improvement of £0·8 billion over the preceding quarter.

European Monetary System

20. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he proposes to take to monitor the future development of the European monetary system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: The European monetary system is kept regularly under review.

27. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he now expects to seek full United Kingdom membership of the European monetary system.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 5 July at column *161*.

36. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, following the Madrid summit and the decision of Spain to join the exchange rate mechanism, he will make a statement as to any new factors which are relevant to his decision as to whether the time is right for Britain to join the European monetary system.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, gave the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) earlier today.

Manufacturing

21. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the annual rate of growth of manufacturing output over the last two years.

56. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what was the annual rate of growth of manufacturing output over the last two years.

Mr. Major: In the two years ending in the three months to April, manufacturing output grew at an average annual rate of 6·2 per cent.

166. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the growth of manufacturing productivity in the United Kingdom since 1979 and in the previous two decades.

Mr. Major: Between 1979 and the three months to April 1989, output per head in United Kingdom manufacturing industry grew at an annual average growth rate of 4·2 per cent, significantly higher than the 1·6 per cent. growth achieved in the 1970s and 3 per cent. growth in the 1960s.

118. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the effect of the current level of interest rates on manufacturing firms employing less than 200 employees.

Mr. Lilley: Inflation is the greatest threat to the prosperity of all manufacturing firms. They will therefore benefit greatly from the Government's determination to keep interest rates as high as necessary for as long as necessary as part of its firm anti-inflationary policy.

112. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest projections for the growth of manufacturing investment in 1989.

191. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest projections for the growth of manufacturing investment in 1989.

Mr. Major: The latest DTI investment intentions survey published in June projected manufacturing investment in constant prices to rise by 15 per cent. in 1989 on a year earlier. The latest CBI quarterly trends survey published in April confirms this buoyant outlook.

37. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the annual rate of growth of manufacturing output over the last two years.

49. **Mr. John Browne:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of manufacturing productivity in the United Kingdom since 1980; and what were the comparable figures in the other major industrial countries.

95. **Mr. Robert B. Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of manufacturing productivity in the United Kingdom since 1980; and what were the comparable figures in the other major industrial countries.

120. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of manufacturing productivity in the United Kingdom since 1980; and what were the comparable figures in the other major industrial countries.

Mr. Major: Comparable figures for manufacturing productivity growth in the major industrialised countries are available only up to the fourth quarter of 1988. Manufacturing productivity, as measured by output per person employed, was 51 per cent. higher in the United Kingdom in 1988 than in 1980. Over the same period in the United States productivity increased by 37 per cent., in Japan by 28 per cent., in Germany by 19 per cent., in France by 27 per cent., in Italy by 35 per cent. and in Canada by 33 per cent.

123. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the growth of manufacturing productivity since 1980.

196. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the growth of manufacturing productivity since 1980.

Mr. Major: Output per head in United Kingdom manufacturing in the three months up to April 1989 was 55 per cent. higher than its average level in 1980, an average annual growth rate of 5·2 per cent.

Interest Rates

22. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has as to the likely direct effect on investment intentions of a 1 per cent. change in interest rates over a period of 12 months.

Mr. Lilley: Despite the sharp rise in short-term interest rates over the past year, the DTI investment intentions survey published on 12 June indicated that industrial investment was expected to rise by 13 per cent. in 1988.

24. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from small businesses on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin).

185. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: Bank base rates are 14 per cent.

79. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Confederation of British Industry about the current level of interest rates.

80. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Confederation of British Industry about the current level of interest rates.

81. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Confederation of British Industry about the current level of interest rates.

85. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Confederation of British Industry about the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: None.

50. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from small businesses on the current level of interest rates.

71. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from small businesses about the present level of interest rates.

194. **Mr. Randall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from small businesses on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin).

47. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he plans to meet representatives from small businesses to discuss the present level of interest rates.

172. **Mr. Michael Welsh:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he plans to meet representatives from small businesses to discuss the present level of interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has no plans for specific meetings of this kind.

35. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding the level of interest rates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on this subject.

29. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present level of interest rates in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* West Germany.

46. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present level of interest rates in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* West Germany.

108. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present level of interest rates in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* West Germany.

142. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present level of interest rates in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* West Germany.

Mr. Lilley: On 4 July, three-month money market rates in the United Kingdom were 14 per cent., compared with 7·2 per cent. in Germany.

Economic Growth

26. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for economic growth in 1989-90.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor forecast at Budget time that real gross domestic product would grow by 2¼ per cent. in 1989-90.

Inflation

23. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current underlying rate of inflation.

31. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current underlying rate of inflation.

89. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current underlying rate of inflation.

176. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current underlying rate of inflation.

Mr. Lilley: The best guide to the underlying rate of inflation is provided by the RPI excluding mortgage interest payments, which currently stands at 6 per cent.

197. **Mr. Foot:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current average rate of inflation in the Group of Seven countries.

Mr. Lawson: The current average rate of inflation in the Group of Seven countries is given in the weekly OECD publication "Current Economic Indicators", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

174. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current average rate of inflation in the Group of Seven countries.

193. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current average rate of inflation in the Group of Seven countries.

198. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current average rate of inflation in the Group of Seven countries.

Mr. Lilley: The current average rate of inflation in the Group of Seven countries is given in the weekly OECD publication "Current Economic Indicators", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

86. **Mr. Oakes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current rate of inflation; and what it was 12 months ago.

Mr. Lawson: The all-items RPI inflation rate was 8·3 per cent. in May of this year, and 4·2 per cent. in May 1988. The best guide to the underlying rate of inflation is provided by the RPI excluding mortgage interest payments, which currently stands at 6 per cent. In May 1988, the corresponding figure was 4·4 per cent.

54. **Mr Eastham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will revise his latest forecast for the United Kingdom rate of inflation.

58. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will revise his latest forecast for the United Kingdom rate of inflation.

102. **Mr Cabom:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will revise his latest forecast for the United Kingdom rate of inflation.

122. **Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will revise his latest forecast for the United Kingdom rate of inflation.

Mr. Lilley: The Autumn Statement, to be published later this year, will include an economic forecast containing the outlook for inflation.

43. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the highest level of inflation recorded this century; when it was recorded; and what is the current rate of inflation.

Mr. Lilley: The highest rate of inflation recorded this century was 26·9 per cent. in August 1975. The current rate of inflation is 8·3 per cent., and the underlying rate excluding mortgage interest payments is 6 per cent.

39. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current rate of inflation; and what it was 12 months ago.

75. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current rate of inflation; and what it was 12 months ago.

128. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current rate of inflation; and what it was 12 months ago.

Mr. Lilley: The all-items RPI inflation rate was 8·3 per cent. in May of this year, and 4·2 per cent. in May 1988. The best guide to the underlying rate of inflation is provided by the RPI excluding mortgage interest payments, which currently stands at 6 per cent. In may 1988, the corresponding figure was 4·4 per cent.

40. **Mr. Terry Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current rate of inflation in the European Community.

144. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current rate of inflation in the European Community.

158. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current rate of inflation in the European Community.

164. **Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current rate of inflation in the European Community.

Mr. Lilley: The current average rate of inflation in the European Community countries is given in the monthly OECD publication "Main Economic Indicators", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Earnings

28. **Sir George Young:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage increase in the real take-home pay of a married man on male average earnings with two children between 1978-79 and 1989-90.

187. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage increase in the real take-home pay of a married man on male average earnings with two children between 1978-79 and 1989-90.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Real take-home pay for a married man with two children on male average earnings is 32 per cent. higher in 1989-90 than in 1978-79.

141. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage increase in the real take-home pay of a married man on half average earnings with two children between 1978-79 and 1989-90.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Real take-home pay for a married man with two children on half average earnings is 25 per cent higher in 1989-90 than in 1978-79.

83. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage increase in the real take-home pay of a married man on three quarters of male average earnings with two children between 1978-79 and 1989-90.

171. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage increase in the real take-home pay of a married man on three quarters of male average earnings with two children between 1978-79 and 1989-90.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Real take-home pay for a married man with two children on three quarters of male average earnings is 29 per cent. higher in 1989-90 than in 1978-79.

45. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of gross earnings a one-earner family with two children on average earnings paid in value added tax in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1989.

94. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of gross earnings a one-earner family with two children on average earnings paid in value added tax in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1989.

Mr. Lilley: A married man on average male earnings, with two children would have paid approximately 2·7 per cent. of his earnings in VAT in 1978-79 and 5 per cent. in 1988-89.

Income Tax

30. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect on a person with a taxable income of £40,000 of raising the highest rate of income tax to 50p in the pound.

72. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect on a person with a taxable income of £40,000 of raising the highest rate of income tax to 50p in the pound.

180. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect on a person with a taxable income of £40,000 of raising the highest rate of income tax to 50p in the pound.

Mr. Norman Lamont: An increase in the higher rate of income tax to 50p would increase the annual income tax liability of a married man with gross annual income liable to tax of £40,000 by £1,492·50. This figure assumes that the taxpayer is entitled to no income tax relief or allowance other than the married man's allowance.

150. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the extra yield of income tax if the basic rate were raised to 33 per cent.

190. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the extra yield of income tax if the basic rate were raised to 33 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson).

91. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the basic rate of income tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend receives various representations on this subject from time to time.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the number of people who would face a higher marginal rate of tax and national insurance if the top rate of income tax were raised to 50 per cent. and the employees' national insurance limit were abolished.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman).

Economic Advisers

32. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people are employed at the Treasury to advise him on exchange rate policy.

97. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people are employed at the Treasury to advise him on exchange rate policy.

105. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people are employed at the Treasury to advise him on exchange rate policy.

179. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people are employed at the Treasury to advise him on exchange rate policy.

Mr. Brooke: Her Majesty's Treasury's monetary group, responsible for advice on short-term interest rates, the exchange rate and Government funding policy, employs 24 people.

38. **Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list his economic advisers in the Treasury.

74. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list his economic advisers.

88. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list his economic advisers.

90. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list his economic advisers at the Treasury.

93. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list his economic advisers.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Members to the reply my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall).

Employment

3. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total increase in employment in the United Kingdom economy and in each of the other major European countries since 1983.

155. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total increase in employment in the United Kingdom economy and in each of the other major European countries since 1983.

156. **Mr. Norris:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total increase in employment in the United Kingdom economy and in each of the other major European countries since 1983.

Mr. Major: The information is as follows:

Growth in Total Employment 1983-88

	Percentage growth	*000s*
United Kingdom	11·0	2,589
Germany	3·2	820
France	−0·2	−50
Italy	4·2	930
Spain	5·5	620
Netherlands	5·6	250
Belgium	3·6	130

Source: Department of Employment for United Kingdom (figures are for increase between June 1983 and June 1988). Other countries' figures calculated from estimates of growth in employment given in June 1989 OECD Economic Outlook (estimates rounded to nearest 10,000).

103. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect on public expenditure of the fall in the level of unemployment over the last two and half years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: As a result of the fall in unemployment between January 1987 and May 1989, public expenditure

on benefits for the unemployed has been approximately £2¾ billion lower than it would otherwise have been over this period.

Exchange Rate

34. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what mechanisms exist for medium or long-term alteration of the exchange rate.

101. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what mechanisms exist for medium or long-term alteration of the exchange rate.

104. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what mechanisms exist for medium or long-term alteration of the exchange rate.

119. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what mechanisms exist for medium or long-term alteration of the exchange rate.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has emphasised that the Government are determined not to allow their firm monetary stance to be undermined by a depreciation of the exchange rate.

69. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to stabilise the exchange rate; and if he will make a statement.

100. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to stabilise the exchange rate; and if he will make a statement.

136. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to stabilise the exchange rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave to the hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) earlier today.

59. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the pound sterling/deutschmark exchange rate 12 months ago; and what it is now.

66. **Mr. Terry Lewis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the pound sterling/deutschmark exchange rate 12 months ago; and what it is at present.

114. **Mr. Leadbitter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the pound sterling/deutschmark exchange rate 12 months ago; and what it is at present.

116. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the pound sterling/deutschmark exchange rate 12 months ago; and what it is now.

Mr. Lilley: Sterling is currently around 1¼ per cent. lower against the deutschmark than 12 months ago.

Investment

41. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what share of gross domestic product was accounted for by business investment in 1988.

130. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what share of gross domestic product was accounted for by business investment in 1988.

153. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what share of gross domestic product was accounted for by business investment in 1988.

Mr. Major: Business investment, as defined in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report", accounted for 14·6 per cent. of GDP in 1988. This is the highest proportion of GDP ever recorded.

167. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out in tabular form the growth of total investment in the United Kingdom in the 1980s, together with the comparable figures for each of the other major European countries.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 3 July at column *32*.

International Monetary Fund

44. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet the managing director of the International Monetary Fund; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor expects to see Mr. Camdessus on the occasion of the IMF interim committee meeting in Washington in September, when a wide range of matters will be discussed.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the most recent discussion of the International Monetary Fund on help to *(a)* Guyana, *(b)* Cameroon, *(c)* Malaysia and *(d)* Sri Lanka.

Mr. Lilley: The discussions to which the hon. Member refers are confidential. Cameroon and Sri Lanka have current fund programmes. Malaysia has not applied for IMF assistance recently. Guyana has arrears to the fund but is currently following a fund-monitored programme with the objective of paying these off.

Public Sector Debt Repayment

51. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the public sector debt repayment in 1988-89.

189. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the public sector debt repayment in 1988-89.

Mr. Lilley: The public sector debt repayment in 1988-89 was £14·4 billion, equivalent to 3 per cent. of GDP. This is the largest net repayment since records on a comparable basis have been kept. A net repayment of around £14 billion has been budgeted for in 1989-90, the third successive year of debt repayment.

63. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much of the public debt he estimates will have been repaid by the end of the financial year 1989-90.

115. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much of the public debt will have been repaid by the end of the financial year 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: It is estimated that roughly one sixth of the net public sector debt that has accumulated over several centuries will have been repaid in the three years to 1989-90.

Output

53. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his latest figures for output per hour worked in the United Kingdom, West Germany and Japan.

188. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his latest figures for output per hour worked in the United Kingdom, West Germany and Japan.

Mr. Lilley: The April 1989 Treasury economic progress report presented estimates which show that output per hour worked in the United Kingdom economy in 1986 was about 50 per cent. higher than in Japan and about 5 per cent. lower than in Germany.

Tourism

55. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total tax yield of tourism from United Kingdom and overseas visitors.

Mr. Lilley: It is not possible to estimate the total tax yield from tourism in the United Kingdom.

Unleaded Petrol

57. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has received recent representations on the tax differential on lead-free petrol.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on the tax differential on lead-free petrol.

Business Start-ups

60. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of business start-ups per week in net terms in 1988-89; and what were the comparable figures in 1987-88.

82. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of business start-ups per week in net terms in 1988-89; and what were the comparable figures in 1987-88.

163. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of business start-ups per week in net terms in 1988-89; and what were the comparable figures in 1987-88.

Mr. Major: In the calendar year 1987, the latest for which figures have been published by the Department of Employment, the net increases in the number of businesses registered for VAT was 45,000 an average of nearly 900 a week. The figures for 1988 will be available later in the summer. However, the unadjusted Customs and Excise figures suggest that the rate of increase since 1987 has been even faster, and the net increase in the financial year 1988-89 may have amounted to some 1,300 per week.

Mortgage Repayments

61. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the monthly increase in mortgage repayments for the average mortgage holder as a result of increases in interest rates over the last 12 months.

78. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the monthly increase in mortgage repayments for the average mortgage holder as a result of increases in interest rates over the last 12 months.

200. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the monthly increase in mortgage repayments for the average mortgage holder as a result of increases in interest rates over the last 12 months.

Mr. Lilley: The increase in payments for the average mortgage holder since July 1988 is estimated to be about £55 per month net of basic rate tax relief.

64. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of high interest rates on mortgage holders; and what steps he is taking to ameliorate this.

65. **Ms. Wise:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of high interest rates on mortgage holders; and what steps he is taking to ameliorate this.

145. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of high interest rates on mortgage holders; and what steps he is taking to ameliorate this.

182. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of high interest rates on mortgage holders; and what steps he is taking to ameliorate this.

Mr. Lilley: Everyone has far more to fear from the resurgence of inflation than from a period of high interest rates.

Profitability

67. **Mr. Tracey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the increase in profitability for non-North sea industrial and commercial companies over the last year for which figures are available.

96. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the increase in profitability for non-North sea industrial and commercial companies over the last year for which figures are available.

131. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the increase in profitability for non-North sea industrial and commercial companies over the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: The net real rate of return for non-North sea industrial and commercial companies was estimated in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" to have risen in 1988 to almost 11 per cent., its highest level for over 20 years.

Investment Income Surcharge

68. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to restore the investment income surcharge.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No.

Imports and Exports

70. **Mr. Radice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will revise his forecast for growth in the current year in *(a)* non-oil imports and *(b)* non-oil exports.

162. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will revise his forecast for growth in 1989 in *(a)* non-oil imports and *(b)* non-oil exports.

175. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will revise his forecast for growth in the current year in *(a)* non-oil imports and *(b)* non-oil exports.

177. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will revise his forecast for growth in 1989 in *(a)* non-oil imports and *(b)* non-oil exports.

Mr. Major: No. Not until the Autumn Statement.

Government Expenditure

84. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the fall in general Government expenditure, excluding privatisation proceeds, as a proportion of gross domestic product since 1982-83.

92. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the fall in general Government expenditure, excluding privatisation proceeds, as a proportion of gross domestic product since 1982-83.

125. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the fall in general Government expenditure, excluding privatisation proceeds, as a proportion of gross domestic product since 1982-83.

Mr. Major: The 1989 "Financial Statement and Budget Report" gave a figure of 39¼ per cent. for the ratio of general Government expenditure, excluding privatisation proceeds, to gross domestic product in 1988-89. The corresponding figure for 1982-83 was 46¾ per cent.

Shareholders

98. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure for the number of shareholders in the United Kingdom; and what information he has on comparable figures in other major EC countries.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The joint Treasury and stock exchange survey carried out in January and February 1989 estimated that approximately 9 million people own shares, 20 per cent. of the adult population; a threefold increase since 1979. I have no directly comparable figure for other major EC countries.

Value Added Tax

99. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the European Community to discuss zero rating of value added tax.

149. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the European Community to discuss zero rating of value added tax.

173. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the European Community to discuss zero rating of value added tax.

183. **Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the European Community to discuss zero rating of value added tax.

Mr. Lilley: VAT zero rates were among a number of matters discussed when my right hon. Friend attended an informal meeting of the Economic and Finance Council (ECOFIN) on 18 and 19 May.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will relieve village and parish halls of liability to value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) on 4 July at column *88*.

124. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of new value added tax registrations for businesses with registered addresses in south-east Cambridgeshire for the calendar years 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989 to date.

Mr. Lilley: The local VAT office at Harlow covers not only south-east Cambridgeshire, but the area bounded by Harlow, Hertford, Royston, Ely and Saffron Walden. The number of new VAT registrations processed by that office for each of the years in question were:

Year	*New registrations*
1985	2,219
1986	2,393
1987	2,679
1988	3,002
1989[1]	883

[1] To 31 March.

Children in Poverty

107. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had from the Child Poverty Action Group on the number of children living in poverty.

109. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had from the Child Poverty Action Group on the number of children living in poverty.

170. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had from the Child Poverty Action Group on the number of children living in poverty.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had from Child Poverty Action Group on the number of children living in poverty.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend has had no such representations.

Married Man's Tax Allowance

110. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the married man's tax allowance.

126. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the married man's tax allowance.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend receives various representations on this subject from time to time.

Money Supply

113. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average annual increase in the money supply on an M0 basis over the past two years; and what estimate he has made of the increase in the current year.

Mr. Lilley: The annual increase was 4·9 per cent. in 1987-88 and 7·2 per cent. in 1988-89. No forecast has been published for 1989-90 but a target range of 1 to 5 per cent. was set in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

Debt

127. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Government's funding policy on the national debt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The Government's funding policy is described in paragraph 2.23 to 2.26 of the 1989-90 "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

Customs Pursuits

132. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the minimum time taken for a United Kingdom customs cutter in hot pursuit of a suspect vessel to obtain clearance to enter *(a)* French, *(b)* Belgian and *(c)* German territorial waters; and if he will make a statement on these arrangements.

Mr. Lilley: Customs and Excise has a memorandum of understanding with the French Customs specifying contact points and the procedures to be followed while operating in each other's waters. Customs has similar close co-operation with other EC countries and has good lines of communication with both the Belgian and German authorities. Clearance for operating in their territorial waters can thus be arranged quickly, usually by telephone.

Credit Cards

133. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the range of interest rates charged by credit card companies.

134. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the range of interest rates currently charged by credit card companies.

140. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the range of interest rates currently charged by credit card companies.

Mr. Lilley: The Chancellor has received a number of representations on this matter.

137. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the range of interest rates currently charged by credit card companies.

139. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the range of interest rates currently charged by credit card companies.

146. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the range of interest rates currently charged by credit card companies.

152. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the range of interest rates currently charged by credit card companies.

160. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the range of interest rates currently charged by credit card companies.

Mr. Lilley: This is a matter for the companies concerned.

City Meetings

138. **Mr. Denis Howell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what meetings he has attended since the Budget in the City of London on matters concerning *(a)* United Kingdom economic policy in general and *(b)* the level of interest rates in particular.

Mr. Lawson: I have meetings from time to time with institutions and individuals from the City of London at which a variety of subjects are discussed.

147. **Ms. Gordon:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what meetings he has attended since the Budget in the City of London on matters concerning *(a)* United Kingdom's economic policy in general and *(b)* the level of interest rates in particular.

151. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what meetings he has attended since the Budget in the City of London on matters concerning *(a)* United Kingdom economic policy in general and *(b)* the level of interest rates in particular.

159. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what meetings he has attended since the Budget in the City of London on matters concerning *(a)* United Kingdom economic policy in general and *(b)* the level of interest rates in particular.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has meetings from time to time with institutions and individuals from the City of London at which a variety of subjects are discussed.

Public Expenditure

143. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on his plans for public expenditure in 1990-91.

199. **Mr. Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on his plans for public expenditure in 1990-91.

Mr. Major: The Government's expenditure plans for 1990-91 were published in the 1989 public expenditure White Paper, Cm 601-621; they will be considered in the public expenditure survey and the results will be announced in my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement.

Civil Servants

154. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of civil servants above the level of principal are women; and what was the proportion in 1979.

Mr. Lawson: At 1 January 1989, 9 per cent. of non-industrial civil servants above grade 7 level were women. This compares with 5½ per cent. at 1 April 1979.

Economic Policy

165. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from institutions in the City of London about United Kingdom economic policy.

181. **Ms. Harman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from institutions in the City of London about United Kingdom economic policy.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones).

Corporation Tax

201. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the basic rate of corporation tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Chancellor has received a number of representations about the rates of corporation tax.

HEALTH

National Health Service Reform

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are his estimates of the extra numbers of accountants required to carry out the new auditing systems proposed in the White Paper "Working for Patients"; and whether these will be funded from existing funds or from an additional special fund.

Mr. Mellor: We expect that staff currently auditing the NHS will transfer to the Audit Commission, as proposed in "Working for Patients". Additional funding has been agreed for this financial year for 22 staff with expertise in various aspects of value for money auditing and for five trainees for general audit work. Future staffing and funding needs are being considered.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any extra consultant posts will be created as a result of consultants' additional duties in carrying out auditing work following National Health Service reforms.

Mr. Mellor: The commitment to medical audit in the White Paper will involve some use of consultants' time. Out of the extra £32 million given to assist in the implementation of the Government proposals for the Health Service this year, an additional £2 million has been allocated to assist in the development of medical audit.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what training will be available to general practitioners on budget management as proposed in his White Paper.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) on 8 May at columns *319-20*.

Cervical Smears

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are made in *(a)* the Eccles constituency, *(b)* the city of Salford, *(c)* Greater Manchester and *(d)* the north-west region for cervical cancer smear tests for women up to the age of 30 years, 30 to 40 years, 40 to 50 years, 50 to 60 years and over 60 years of age; if he will provide the figures for these tests and these age groups for 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1988; what new proposals on these tests have been made by the North West regional health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold data for the Eccles constituency and the city of Salford centrally in the form requested. Data for North Western regional health authority and Greater Manchester is provided in the table.

Cervical cytology
Number of smear tests

Thousands

	North Western RHA	*Greater Manchester*
1970	[1]99	n/a
1975	283	209
1980	333	240
1985	399	274
1987-88	389	235

Source: Form SBH 140.
[1] There were boundary changes between 1970 and 1975. This figure relates to the Manchester region.

The national cervical cancer screening programme will provide screening for women aged 20 to 64. Health authorities are making arrangements to invite all eligible women for screening within five years of introduction of each district's computerised call and recall system. All districts in England commenced their programme by April 1988.

Opting Out

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what regulations or guidance exist to govern the balloting of consultants on opting out; and whether these were applied in the recent ballot at Queen's medical centre, Nottingham.

Mr. Mellor: None, although we have made it clear that when the time comes for formal application, it would not be sensible for RHAs to organise ballots of staff or any other groups with an interest.

NHS Grading

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by how much Southampton district health authority was underfunded for the purposes of nurses regrading.

Mr. Mellor: The Government met the full cost of funding the nurse regrading exercise, based upon regional health authorities' own estimates of the costs. This is therefore a matter for the regional health authority and my hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman, Mr. Buchanan, for such information as he requires.

Nurses (Retraining)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how long he estimates it will take to retrain all state enrolled nurses who have currently expressed an interest in retraining in each health authority in England and Wales;

(2) what moneys he intends to make available to the health authorities for state enrolled nurses to undergo conversion courses.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has given an assurance that the Government regard enrolled nurse conversion and plans for safeguarding the continued contribution of those who do not convert as an integral part of the implementation of the Project 2000 reforms of nurse education and training. Thirteen Project demonstration districts have submitted plans for enrolled nurse conversion, and funding has been made available to those districts. The overall timetable for the national implementation of Project 2000 has not yet been decided.

The number of training institutions approved to conduct conversion courses has increased from six in 1985-86 to 138 in December 1988. We welcome the guidance which has been issued by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing Midwifery and Health Visiting on more flexible means of conversion.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many state enrolled nurses have been accepted for retraining this year in each health authority in England and Wales;

(2) what is the current size of the list of state enrolled nurses waiting to be retrained by each health authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect this information for England centrally. Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Accident and Emergency Services

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, further to his answer of 27 June, *Official Report*, column 424, how he intends that district health authorities should be responsible for securing accident and emergency services in their districts where regional health authorities refuse any accident and emergency service provision for that district.

Mr. Mellor: All district health authorities will be responsible for seeing that contracts are in place which ensure that their residents have access to comprehensive health services, including accident and emergency provision. It will be the responsibility of regional health authorities to monitor the performance of their districts to secure this objective. Regions' performance of this role (and others) will be monitored by the NHS management executive.

Smoking

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many letters from individuals his Department received about smoking in the workplace in the last 12 month period and in the immediately preceding 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In the 12 months ending on 30 June 1989 the Department received 54 letters on this subject, nine of which had been forwarded by Members of Parliament.

The corresponding figures for the 12 months ending on 30 June 1988 were 480 and 42.

Tobacco

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will be discussing the continued existence of the Health Promotion Research Trust in his current negotiations with the tobacco industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Funding for the Health Promotion Research Trust does not figure in the formal voluntary agreements with the tobacco industry which we hope shortly to renegotiate. However, the trust has undertaken much valuable work since its creation in 1984. Careful consideration will therefore need to be given to its future as the industry's agreed contributions will cease at the end of this financial year.

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship receives audited reports of expenditure on advertising from the United Kingdom tobacco companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Under the voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry on tobacco products' advertising and promotion, and health warnings, the Tobacco Advisory Council and the Imported Tobacco Products Advisory Council provide the Department with confidential quarterly returns of net cigarette brand and hand rolling tobacco advertising expenditure data for press and posters. The position is then reported to the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship.

Speech Therapists

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the grades of speech therapists in England, Wales and Scotland following the regrading under HSS(TC7)3188 broken down by area board, showing the percentage in each grade before regrading and the percentage after.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have the information in the form requested, but the tables show the percentage of speech therapists in each grade in regional health authorities in England at 30 September 1989. The information relating to Wales and Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. The position by English region is as follows:

Percentage speech therapy staff by grade as at 30 September 1987

Regional health authority	*Snr II*	*Snr I*	*Ch IV*	*Ch III*	*Dist CH II*	*Dist CH I*	*Dist Snr chief*
Northern	39·43	40·89	3·99	6·33	8·73	0·00	0·63
Yorkshire	35·69	49·78	1·12	3·60	6·08	2·48	1·24
Trent	47·94	32·38	4·55	10·37	2·38	0·40	1·98
East Anglian	47·05	36·27	2·22	7·87	5·73	0·86	0·00
North West Thames	40·70	41·08	4·40	8·67	3·75	0·47	0·94
North East Thames	36·13	39·18	3·18	15·59	4·66	0·85	0·42
South East Thames	39·38	39·94	3·60	10·62	5·08	0·92	0·46
South West Thames	28·83	51·20	0·42	13·82	5·14	0·60	0·00

Regional health authority	Snr II	Snr I	Ch IV	Ch III	Dist CH II	Dist CH I	Dist Snr chief
Wessex	46·47	27·99	4·90	13·21	4·45	2·97	0·00
Oxford	31·87	44·40	3·48	15·38	2·09	2·78	0·00
South Western	34·47	49·26	2·75	8·03	2·20	2·20	1·10
West Midlands	45·07	36·03	6·17	6·05	5·11	0·79	0·79
Mersey	41·53	34·48	0·88	13·58	6·88	2·65	0·00
North Western	44·98	37·75	4·05	6·76	5·60	0·43	0·43

Percentage speech therapy staff by grade as at 30 September 1988

Regional health authority	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D	Grade E
Northern	13·37	47·96	25·13	11·17	2·38
Yorkshire	7·11	49·83	33·68	5·98	3·40
Trent	10·72	56·83	26·79	2·38	3·28
East Anglian	9·40	59·77	21·78	6·49	2·56
North West Thames[1]	10·93	63·80	16·37	5·32	3·58
North East Thames	12·55	32·01	36·06	14·67	4·72
South East Thames	15·03	52·02	22·14	8·43	2·38
South West Thames	10·28	54·30	27·56	5·24	2·62
Wessex	5·23	61·72	24·10	5·23	3·73
Oxford	6·85	53·45	28·51	7·19	3·99
South Western[2]	—	—	—	—	—
West Midlands	10·59	59·21	20·43	7·58	2·20
Mersey	13·30	48·23	29·79	6·03	2·66
North Western	14·81	39·98	36·60	4·30	4·30

[1] North West Thames figures as at 31 March 1989.
[2] South Western figures not available in comparable form.

Cytogeneticists (Salaries)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average salary in each of the last 10 years for a cytogeneticist with a PhD or MSc in *(a)* Greater London and *(b)* Manchester.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the pay increases for cytogeneticists in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: Cytogeneticists have received the same increases each year as physicists, biochemists and clinical psychologists. The percentage increases in the pay round year 1 August to 31 July for the last ten years are as follows:

	Percentage
1978-79	27·0
1979-80	14·0
1980-81	6·0
1981-82	[1]10·77
1982-83	[1]10·77
1983-84	4·5
1984-85	4·7
1985-86	6·0
1986-87	5·0
1987-88	5·5

[1]This figure represents an increase implemented with effect from 11 September 1982 to cover a two year period.

Natural Medicines

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has plans to introduce regulations to outlaw the sale of natural, herbal and homeopathic medicines and drugs other than through a pharamaceutical outlet to bring the United Kingdom into line with other EEC countries.

Mr. Mellor: We have no such plans at present. The European Community is committed to directives on homeopathic medicines and conditions of supply of medicines to the public, but specific proposals have not yet been submitted to the Council of Ministers. When EC proposals are published, we shall consider them carefully for compatibility with United Kingdom traditions and communicate with interested parties as to the United Kingdom input to negotiations.

Haemoglobinopathy

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in the *Official Report* the results of his survey of haemoglobinopathy services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The analysis of district health authorities' responses to the Department's request for information on screening and counselling services for sickle cell and thalassaemic diseases in nearing completion. When the completed analysis has been studied, I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures he has proposed to co-ordinate the activities of the haemoglobinopathy charities; what plans he has for further action; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Officials of the Department separately met representatives of three of the national voluntary organisations concerned in September 1988 to discuss the possibility of a national umbrella body to co-ordinate the activities of the haemoglobinopathy charities. The voluntary bodies concerned expressed doubts about the usefulness of such a body. In view of the expressed lack of interest we have no plans to proceed further with these proposals.

Drug Costs

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to be able to make available the net ingredient cost of prescriptions using the names of the products dispensed by pharmacy contractors in 1988; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Mellor: We do not expect to have the information requested until October 1989 at the earliest. When it becomes available a copy will be placed in the Library.

Ancillary Staff

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the total numbers of ancillary staff employed in each district and regional health authority.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 14 June 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 4 July.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Set-aside Scheme

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many hectares of agricultural land have been set aside under the European Economic Community scheme in each member state for the current year.

Mr. Ryder: The information for the 11 member states required to implement the scheme is as follows:

Member states	*Hectares set aside*
Belgium	329
Denmark	Nil
France	15,707
Germany	169,729
Greece	n.a.
Ireland	1,310
Italy	155,606
Luxembourg	Nil
Netherlands	2,621
Spain	34,229
United Kingdom	54,779
Total	434,310

Source: European Commission.

Morecambe Bay (Shellfish)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why he has not designated shellfish waters in Morecambe bay under the provisions of European Community directive 79/923/EEC.

Mr. Howard: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 20 February 1989 to the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), *Official Report*, column *496*.

Fylde Coast (Sewage Outfall)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contacts his Department has had with the North West water authority over its proposals to construct a long sea outfall at Rossall point on the Fylde coast.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Officials were informed of the North West water authority's work at an early stage. Before plans were drawn up the Ministry were asked to provide information about fisheries in the Fylde coast area. After consultation with local fisheries organisations this information was provided with a view to seeking to ensure that interference with fisheries was avoided. The Ministry sought from the authority information about the possible locations of the discharge and the nature and likely effect of the effluent. The authority gave a detailed presentation of the results of its studies of the various options and explained the reasons for the preferred option, and the Ministry has clarified further points of detail. The Ministry has since been formally consulted under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 on the proposed outfall.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the potential for hydro transportion of sediment-associated viruses from the proposed long sea outfall in to the Lyne deep from Rossall point on the Fylde coast to shell fisheries in Morecambe bay and adjoining coastlines.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Based on the design characteristics of the proposed outfall, the location of the shellfisheries and experience with viral-related shellfish contamination elsewhere, the Ministry does not expect sediment transport of viruses to present a problem. To demonstrate that no problem occurs the Ministry have recommended to North West water authority that, if the outfall is constructed, monitoring of the microbiological quality of relevant shellfish stocks be undertaken before and after discharge commences.

Intervention Stores

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total amount of wheat, beef and olive oil which is stockpiled (i) in the United Kingdom and (ii) in the European Economic Community as a whole, in *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1984 and *(c)* 1979; and what was the total cost of storage and maintaining these for 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The table shows the total amount of wheat, beef and olive oil held in public intervention stores in (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) the European Community in 1979, 1984 and 1989. EC stocks of beef and wheat reached peak levels of 711 and 11,843 thousand tonnes respectively in 1985. The current levels of EC beef and wheat stocks represent reductions of 53 per cent. and 82 per cent. respectively from the peak levels.

Commodity	[2]*United Kingdom stocks '000 tonnes*			[3]*EC stock '000 tonnes*		
	1979	*1984*	*1989*	*1979*	*1984*	*1989*
Wheat	Nil	95	255	[1]1,219	[1]4,989	[1]3,289
Beef	11	10	21	161	295	331
Olive Oil	n/a	Nil	Nill	n/a	185	259

The cost of storing and maintaining these stocks during 1988 was:

£ million[5]

	EC	United Kingdom
Cereals[4]	440	74
Beef	382	36
Olive Oil	11	0
Total	833	110

[1] Includes durum wheat. No intervention for durum wheat in the United Kingdom.
[2] End April.
[3] End April, except for olive oil in 1984 (end March).
[4] Separate breakdown for wheat not available.
[5] Expenditure charged to the 1988 budget relates to expenditure during the period November 1987 to October 15 1988.

Tenderising Enzymes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he plans to introduce legislation prohibiting the administration of meat tenderising enzymes;

(2) what research has been commissioned by his Ministry into the use of tenderising enzymes administered by inter-jugular injection prior to slaughter.

Mr. Donald Thompson: On 20 June I announced that our decision not to accept the recommendation by the Farm Animal Welfare Council in its report on the slaughter of red meat animals that the administration of the tenderising enzyme papain to cattle before slaughter should be banned would stand.

Research into the effects of the technique on the live animal was carried out following publication of the council's report. I have placed a copy of the results of the research in the Library.

Dichlofenthion

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to restrict the fat-soluble pesticide, dichlofenthion, for use in sheep-dips and other agricultural uses.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding reply 27 June 1989]:* Pesticides and veterinary medicines containing dichlofenthion require licences. One such sheep dip is currently licensed but has not been marketed for some years and its licence will expire later this year.

THE ARTS

National Museums

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has received the corporate plans of the national museums.

Mr. Luce: I have received the 1989 corporate plans of the national museums and galleries. I and my officials have met a number of the institutions to discuss their plans and will be meeting others in the near future.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he plans to publish the corporate plans of the national museums.

Mr. Luce: It is for the trustees and director of the individual national museums or gallery to consider the circulation of their corporate plan, including whether this should be published.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Industrial Disablement Benefit

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for industrial disablement benefit have been made in each year since October 1984 up to the latest available date.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

	Number
October 1984 to September 1985	112,298
October 1985 to September 1986	124,518
October 1986 to September 1987	104,222
October 1987 to September 1988	90,727
October 1988 to March 1989	[1]44,734

[1] Six months.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in how many cases of claims made since 1 October 1986 for industrial disablement benefit *(a)* awards were made at less than 14 per cent. on the basis of (i) provisional and (ii) final awards and *(b)* awards were made at 14 per cent. or more.

Mr. Scott: Between 1 October 1986 to 31 March 1989, there were 101,359 assessments of disablement at less than 14 per cent. Between 1 October 1986 and 31 March 1988, the latest date for which information is available, there were 14,693 awards for assessments at more than 14 per cent. disablement. It is not possible to distinguish between provisional and final awards.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what savings have been made in each year since October 1986 up to the latest available date by operation of the 14 per cent. rule for industrial disability.

Mr. Scott: The estimated savings are as follows:

	£ million
October 1986 to April 1987	10·9
April 1987 to April 1988	35·0
April 1988 to April 1989	39·5

Vaccine Damage

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security why, pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South, *Official Report*, 20 June, columns *94-96*, some of the information requested regarding all vaccine damage payments made in 1980, 1981 and 1982 is not available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The details requested cannot be supplied for any of the vaccine damage payments made in 1980 as these have been destroyed in accordance with normal arrangements. Unfortunately some of those records for 1981 and 1982 are missing and cannot be found despite a very thorough search.

Office Reorganisation

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will ensure that outstationing of Department of Social Security offices will not take place until such time as the operational strategy computer provisions have been completed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The project to move out of 21 London offices the "backroom" work that does not need face to face contact with the public is now well advanced. We are going ahead with this initiative because of our commitment to ensuring our customers receive the highest quality service.

We are confident that the operational strategy computer systems are capable of supporting the needs of the project and of our customers.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will ensure that when outstationing of Department of Social Security offices is completed, telephone calls to the social security centres by claimants from local offices, public kiosks, and their homes, will be charged at the local rate and that the same charges will be available to advisers acting on the claimants' behalf.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Telephone calls to the social security centres made from claimants' homes and public kiosks in the London local call area will be charged at the local rate. Calls made from the telephones to be sited in the public areas of the branch offices will give direct access to the social security centre and will be free.

Advisers acting on behalf of claimants will be able to use the same facilities and, provided the call is made from within the London local call area, they will be charged at the local rate.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what facilities for people with disabilities will be provided in the new Department of Social Security branch offices to enable proper access and a comfortable wait.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Branch offices are still in the planning stage, but the aim will be to continue to improve and provide facilities for the disabled in these offices.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what undertakings have been given to local Department of Social Security staff affected by outstationing about their future employment by the Department of Social Security in the same geographical area.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Staff who work in the local offices participating in the relocation of work project have been given the following assurances:

(i) there is no question of compulsory transfer to the social security centres in Glasgow, Belfast and Wigan but any member of staff who wishes to transfer may apply to do so;

(ii) when transfers are necessary, staff will be expected to transfer to local, regional or headquarters offices within daily travelling distance of their home. All such transfers will be to other offices within the London pay zone, unless an individual prefers to go somewhere else;

(iii) each individual member of staff will be treated on an individual basis. Cases of immobility will be dealt with first;

(iv) all staff will be invited individually to nominate the offices they would wish to transfer to. Management will do everything they can to match transfers to individual preferences. Where an individual cannot be posted to an office of his or her choice in the first instance, he or she will be given top priority when vacancies occur within one of the preferred offices;

(v) we do not envisage any need for compulsory transfers involving a move of home. There should be no need for redundancies.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether facilities such as a nappy-changing area and tea and coffee machine will be provided in the new Department of Social Security branch offices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The provision of such facilities will be considered when the new branch offices are being developed. The improved service to the public they will provide is expected to reduce significantly the time customers spend in our offices. The need for such facilities will be determined in the light of experience.

EC Benefit Systems

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what approximate correlation exists in each EEC state between the level of social security benefits and gross domestic product per head.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest available figures are as follows:

Current Expenditure on Social Protection as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (Eurostat)

	1983	*1984*
Netherlands	33·7	—
Belgium	30·8	29·4
Denmark	30·2	28·7
West Germany	29·1	28·7
France	28·5	—
Luxembourg	26·5	—
United Kingdom	24·1	24·1
Ireland	23·9	23·3
Italy	23·7	23·3

No figures available yet for Greece, Spain or Portugal.

Benefit Statistics

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest available figures for the cumulative amounts, since 1979, of *(a)* unclaimed benefits, *(b)* benefit fraud and *(c)* expenditure savings, expressed in real terms, at 1989 prices.

Mr. Scott: It is not possible to ascertain precisely the total amounts of Social Security benefits fraudulently claimed or left unclaimed. Details of the latest available information on the take up of benefits is contained in paragraphs 27 to 29 on pages 15-16 of Cm 615. Similarly it is not possible to show the cumulative effects of expenditure savings since 1979. Calculations for the income-related benefits would be impossible in the light of major changes over the past decade. An analysis of the national insurance benefits could be carried out only at disproportionate cost using a range of artificial assumptions, rendering any answer speculative.

Single Parents

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many single parents in receipt of one-parent benefit have been sent green forms instructing them to send their benefit books to local social security offices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Postal review is a normal part of benefit procedure. A postal review of one-parent benefit claimants began in February. So far 300,000 postal review forms have been issued. Claimants should return their order books to the social security office only if they have changes to report.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has issued any instructions to local social security offices laying down a maximum period for which one-parent benefit books sent in as directed by green forms may be held before being returned to the parent.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. All order books returned to local offices for adjustment are returned as soon as possible. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind he may care to write to me.

Income Support

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are currently having their claim for family credit reviewed as not being consistently engaged in remunerative work for over 24 hours a week while unable to claim income support because they regularly work over 24 hours a week; and when he expects to make a decision over eligibility for family credit in these cases.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None, but we are considering whether legislative changes are necessary to minimise the risk of families failing to qualify for either family credit or income support in the future.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the medical evidence that £21·70 a week paid for food is sufficient for a healthy diet for a person living in bed and breakfast accommodation; and what similar medical evidence is used to calculate other income support applicable amounts.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no specific amount included in income support levels to cover food.

Child Benefit

Mr. Matthew Taylor To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of ceasing to treat *(a)* child benefit and *(b)* one-parent benefit as a resource for housing benefit, assuming case-load take-up levels of family credit of *(a)* 40 per cent., *(b)* 50 per cent., *(c)* 60 per cent. *(d)* 70 per cent., *(e)* 80 per cent., *(f)* 90 per cent. and *(g)* 100 per cent.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 9 June 1989]:* I regret that the precise information requested cannot be provided. Housing benefit currently comprises four distinct elements —rent rebates, rent allowances (all of Great Britain), rate rebates (in England and Wales) and community charge rebate (in Scotland).

The estimated costs in 1989-90 of ceasing to treat child benefit and one-parent benefit as a resource for housing benefit would be as follows:

	£ million
(i) Rent rebate and rent allowance:	
(a) Child benefit	80
(b) One parent benefit	7
(ii) Projected cost assuming rate rebates were fully in place throughout Great Britain:	
(a) Child benefit	40
(b) One parent benefit	3
(iii) Project cost assuming community charge rebates were fully in place throughout GB:	
(a) Child benefit	60
(b) One parent benefit	2

Notes

1. Where a person with at least one child in his family and working 24 hours or more a week claims housing benefit and has not also claimed family credit, calculation of potential family credit is included in the assessment of housing benefit. (The notional amount so arrived at is not counted as part of the housing benefit income for 25 working days following the despatch of the notice of housing benefit entitlement to the claimant to allow reasonable time for him to claim family credit.) Differential take-up of family credit would not, therefore, affect the estimated costs set out above.
2. Some lone parents, such as widows and those on invalidity benefit or retirement pension, do not get one-parent benefit. They would, therefore, be excluded from the increase in housing benefit that other lone parents would get from the disregard of one-parent benefit.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the cumulative total of his Department's expenditure since May 1979 to date over and above the expenditure level prevailing in May 1979.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* The total programme of public expenditure on social security in 1979-80 and each of the following years, including the forecast for 1989-90, is as follows. The size of the programme had the level of spending remained exactly as it was in 1979-80 in real terms is also indicated:

	£ billion	
	Actual/ planned expenditure	*Expenditure at level of 1979-80*
1979-80	19·4	19·4
1980-81	23·5	23·0
1981-82	28·6	25·2
1982-83	32·5	27·0
1983-84	35·2	28·3
1984-85	38·1	29·7
1985-86	41·5	31·2
1986-87	44·4	32·3
1987-88	46·3	34·0
1988-89	47·6	36·6
[1]1989-90	51·1	38·4

[1] Planned.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received calling for the payment of attendance allowance automatically as of right to blind people living alone: what his reponse has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* We have occasionally received representations on this subject in the course of correspondence with hon. Members on behalf of individual constituents. In reply we have explained that entitlement to an attendance allowance is not geared to specific disabling conditions or illnesses. People with a severe disability qualify for the allowance if they require from someone else either frequent attention in connection with bodily functions or continual supervision or watching over to avoid substantial danger to themselves or others.

PRIME MINISTER

Psychiatric Patients

Q10. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Prime Minister when she expects to meet representatives of MIND to discuss the relevance for discharged long-stay psychiatric patients of section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Representation and Consultation) Act 1986.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Taunton

Q16. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make an official visit to Taunton.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

Inner Cities Policy

Q17. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received on the Government's inner cities policy.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations, many of them in support of the Government's inner cities policies. Under the comprehensive range of measures, costing £3·5 billion this year which makes up the action for cities initiative, good progress continues to be made in the regeneration of our inner cities. In the 57 inner city target areas, unemployment fell by almost 24 per cent. in the 12 months to May 1989. Recorded crime in the Metropolitan police force areas fell by 6 per cent. in 1988. Involvement of private companies continues to grow—over the last six months the number of companies working with the Government's inner city task forces has increased from 450 to 500.

Economy

Q22. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the performance of the economy.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of such representations.

Toxic Solid Waste

Q23. **Sir Hugh Rossi:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the disposal of toxic solid waste.

The Prime Minister: A number of representations have been received on a variety of subjects related to the disposal of toxic waste.

Privatisation

Q26. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding Her Majesty's Government's privatisation programme.

The Prime Minister: I receive a number of representations from time to time regarding the privatisation programme.

Human Rights

Q35. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government will support the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights in the form outlined in the Human Rights Bill which is set down for Second Reading on 7 July; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. We are committed to, and support, the principles of human rights in the European Convention on Human Rights but we believe that is is for Parliament rather than the judiciary to determine how these principles are best secured.

Litter

Q40. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received on the litter problem.

The Prime Minister: I have received a large number of letters from people concerned about litter. They demonstrate wide support for tougher measures to control litter. The Government intend soon to announce a range of proposals for improving legislation in this area.

Pension Age

Q49. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Prime Minister what is the Government's policy towards the equalisation of pension age for men and women as proposed in the draft directive of the European Community entitled "Equal Treatment for Men and Women in Pensions and other Benefits"; and what attitude towards the proposal she will adopt in the Council of Ministers.

The Prime Minister: At the meeting of the Labour and Social Affairs Council of Ministers in Luxembourg on 12 June neither France nor the United Kingdom were able to lift their reserves on this draft directive. Consequently the draft directive will not be discussed at the Council of Ministers but will be referred back for further work by officials. The House of Lords Select Committee on the European Community published its report on this draft directive earlier this month and the Government will respond to that report in due course.

Roads

Q50. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations on the case for improved roads.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has received a number of representations recently supporting the proposals announced in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" for a greatly expanded trunk road building programme.

Human Rights (China)

Q51. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government will refer the actions of the Chinese Government in their present policy of violence and reprisals against Chinese students to the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We intend to raise our concerns about the recent deplorable events in China at the next session of the United Nations Committee on Human Rights and at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) which meets this month in Geneva.

Iran

Q86. **Mr. Goodlad:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the United Kingdom's relations with Iran.

The Prime Minister: I have received regular representations about our relations with Iran, both from hon. Members and from members of the public. We have consistently made clear that we can have normal relations only if Iran clearly renounces the use or threat of terrorism and violence in all forms.

Housing

Q96. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding housing.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Shipbuilders

Q109. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, 20 June, *Official Report*, column 77, where funds are provided to United Kingdom shipyards for construction under the shipbuilding intervention fund, what proportion of those funds is required to be spent within the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: Under European Community rules we cannot discriminate against other EC content. However, in administering intervention fund and intervention aid, officials in the Department of Trade and Industry and the Northern Ireland Department of Economic Development encourage United Kingdom shipyards to procure as much EC content as possible.

Water Bill

Q142. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received on the Water Bill.

The Prime Minister: Many individuals and organisations have commented on a wide range of privatisation matters, which are being considered in the context of the Water Bill.

Royal Air Force

Q143. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the Royal Air Force.

The Prime Minister: I receive many representations about the Royal Air Force.

West Yorkshire

Q165. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make an official visit to West Yorkshire.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Police Force

Q167. **Mr. John Browne:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the police force.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations.

At the end of March this year, police strength in England and Wales stood at 125,631. This is a record and represents some 14,100 more officers than when the Government first took office. Expenditure on the police is up by almost 55 per cent. in real terms. We shall continue to regard the police as a priority.

Common Agricultural Policy

Q169. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the common agricultural policy.

The Prime Minister: The Government frequently receive representations about agricultural policy.

The United Kingdom agricultural industry is widely respected for its efficiency and competitiveness. It is well placed to benefit from the opportunities for fair competition which completion of the EC's single internal market will bring. And I was pleased at the royal show to pay tribute to the enormous contribution the agriculture industry and the thousands of individual farmers make to our national life.

Nuclear Deterrent

Q170. **Mr. Malins:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the nuclear deterrent.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of letters from individuals and organisations.

Fraud (EC)

Q176. **Sir Anthony Grant:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding fraud in the European Community.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations.

National Health Service

Q219. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the National Health Service.

The Prime Minister: The Government have received large numbers of representations on the National Health Service from members of the public, the professions, and various interest groups. Many share the Government's desire for a Health Service that gives patients more choice and rights as consumers, that is more responsive to the needs of local communities, and that builds on its existing successes and efficiency to give better value for money.

Raw Nook Community Centre, Bradford

Q220. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she expects to pay an official visit to Raw Nook community centre in Bradford.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no present plans to do so.

Harold Macmillan (Biography)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister whether she has obtained for the library of No. 10 Downing street, Alistair Horne's biography of Harold Macmillan.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Government Departments

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received about the future structure of Government Departments.

The Prime Minister: I receive numerous representations on a wide variety of issues including the structure of Government Departments.

Rail Travel

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will state the last occasion she travelled on a train in order to carry out official engagements; and how many times in all she has done so since May 1979.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 3 July 1989 at column *13*.

Engagements

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 July.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 July.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 July.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

TRANSPORT

"Better Rail" Campaign

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received from the NUR's "Better Rail" campaign.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met representatives of NUR, ASLEF and TSSA after the Nera report was published last year. Since then we have received about 700 representations from hon. Members and members of the public.

Trucks (Suspension)

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish the Transport and Road Research Laboratory's findings on road-friendly suspension systems for 40-tonne trucks.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We attach high importance to road-friendly suspensions on all vehicles. We are encouraging the use of air suspensions particularly on the heaviest articulated lorries. I am sending to my hon. Friend and placing in the Library copies of the two most recent reports published by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory about relevant research on suspensions and the dynamic relationship between axles and the road. This forms part of the case Britain is arguing internationally to secure vehicles that are more road-friendly.

Coastguard Service

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why the Coastguard chief is located in the heart of London.

Mr. Portillo: The chief coastguard has traditionally been located in London to ensure ready access to Ministers. The need for coastguard headquarters to remain in London is currently under review.

Mobility Roadshow

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people attended the Mobility roadshow; how many motor manufacturers exhibited at the Mobility roadshow; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The fourth Mobility roadshow, organised by the Department of Transport, took place over three days last month at the Department's Transport and Road Research Laboratory in Berkshire. It was attended by about 20,000 people, the majority of whom were disabled.

Eleven major motor manufacturers exhibited the latest models of standard production cars suitable for adaptation for disabled people. Nearly 4,000 test drives were taken in adapted cars on the laboratory's private road system.

Among the show's other 140 exhibitors were manufacturers of buses, minibuses, vans, vehicle lifts, hand control equipment, wheelchairs and small powered vehicles and many other products, as well as a range of organisations offering services and advice to people with disabilities.

Plans are in hand for the fifth show to be held in the summer of 1991.

East London Rail Study

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he expects to announce the conclusions to his east London rail study.

Mr. Portillo: Shortly.

M4 (Safety Fencing)

Sir William Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been spent on safety fencing on the M4 during the year 1988-89; how much is expected to be spent in 1989-90; and, of the amounts spent or to be spent, how much is attributable to replacements of faulty safety fencing.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is estimated that some £270,000 was spent in 1988-89 on the replacement and maintenance of safety fences on the M4. The replacement of fences is undertaken for various reasons such as changes in road surface levels as a result of resurfacing, or damage caused by impacts, and it is not possible to attribute the amounts spent to particular reasons. We are not aware of any safety fencing having to be replaced because of inadequate

performance. Some £380,000 has been allocated for replacement and maintenance in 1989-90. Actual expenditure will depend on the extent of unpredictable factors such as accident damage. All safety fences continue to be regularly inspected and maintenanced.

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people with severely deformed or no arms currently hold orange badges.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

The responsibility for assessing applicants for orange badges rests with individual local authorities.

The Department neither issues nor withdraws badges.

The national scheme was created to help people not capable of walking.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has of the number of people with severely deformed or no arms who have difficulty in shopping unless special provision is made for them.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available.

The OPCS survey into disability in Great Britain states that there are 1·23 million people with reaching and stretching disabilities and 1·737 million with dexterity problems. Caution is needed in using any of the figures in the report because:

(i) a relatively low threshold of disability was used for the report.

(ii) people with both reaching and stretching and dexterity problems would be counted twice.

(iii) the survey was designed to be a survey of disability, not of the causes of disability. People could be counted as having reaching or stretching difficulties because they had sight problems or suffered from mental illness etc.

The Department of Health has advised that there were 12,800 upper limb amputees in England and Wales in 1986. This figure represents only people seen by artificial limb centres and so does not represent the total number of amputees. It is not known how many of those artificial upper limb users would have actual difficulty in carrying shopping. Many will have one missing limb rather than two.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what initiatives he has undertaken to help people with severely deformed or no arms to be able to use normal parking facilities.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's Mobility roadshow held at the Transport and Road Research Laboratory (16-18 June) attracted 20,000 people from many parts of the country to view and test a wide range of adapted vehicles and other mobility aids and products.

We are constantly on the look out for new ideas and ways of helping people with all kinds of disabilities.

We are supporting the Parking Bill currently before Parliament. This would provide for the wider use of systems of payment such as magnetic cards or vouchers rather than coins. These new systems can be more convenient for many disabled drivers, particularly those with dexterity problems.

We tabled an amendment to the Bill which would give the Secretary of State power to require local authorities to display information at the entrance to off-street car parks, including the availability of allocated spaces for disabled people. The British Standards Institution is currently developing a code of practice on information required at public car parks.

The British Standards Institution is also working on a range of new standards for parking control equipment. Equipment manufacturers and disabled people are represented on the relevant technical committee. The standards will take account of features such as the height of displays and the ease of operation of equipment.

We give advice to organisations which seek to make it easier for disabled people to use their cars.

We advise individual disabled motorists through our mobility advice and vehicle information service (MAVIS).

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been done into the range of activities for which disabled people use the orange badge; and to what extent it is used in connection with shopping.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The orange badge scheme allows people with severe mobility problems to park closer to their destinations and to stay longer than normal parking regulations permit. The scheme helps badge holders to engage in as wide a range of activities as they can manage.

The design of buildings and their external spaces is also important. Much progress has been made by Government, local authorities, and private bodies over recent years. Shop mobility schemes are operated by voluntary bodies in many parts of the country. We have preferred to concentrate our efforts in practical ways, rather than to commission research into particular issues such as shopping.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about fire safety in the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: The Government are fully seized of the need for fire safety in the Channel tunnel. In agreement with the French Government they set up an independent safety authority composed of senior United Kingdom and French experts, to vet all Channel tunnel designs and operational procedures and, when necessary, to advise the intergovernmental commission to reject anything which would not afford a proper degree of safety. Both United Kingdom and French fire experts are members of the authority.

Accident Investigations

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the reasons for *(a)* making publicly available investigations into accidents involving aircraft and *(b)* not making publicly available those into accidents involving ships.

Mr. Portillo: Regulations are about to be laid before the House governing the investigation of accidents involving ships. Among other things these provide for the publication of reports or summaries of investigations.

This will put marine and aircraft investigations on broadly the same footing.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish findings of the report into the incident involving the hydrofoil from Southampton on 27 November 1987.

Mr. Portillo: When the investigation into the incident is completed a summary report will be made public.

I cannot give a date for the release of this report as the investigation is still in progress.

European Transport Systems

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake a comparative study of fares, investment, public transport usage and road congestion in European nations.

Mr. Portillo: No. The circumstances of different European cities are not readily comparable.

Pedestrian Crossings

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the figures for road deaths for *(a)* children and *(b)* adults, killed near pedestrian crossings for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is as follows:

Number of children and adults killed near pedestrian crossings: 1978-87

	Children killed on pedestrian crossing	*Children killed within 50 metres of pedestrian crossing*	*Adult killed on pedestrian crossing*	*Adult killed within 50 metres of pedestrian crossing*
1978	15	16	124	109
1979	6	10	118	144
1980	16	14	115	135
1981	10	13	101	97
1982	13	14	112	120
1983	11	23	114	136
1984	10	15	96	148
1985	12	20	106	123
1986	13	13	126	158
1987	13	21	96	140

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to increase the amount of time allowed for pedestrians to make use of pelican crossings when crossing the road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The recommended timings for pelican crossings were revised in 1987, and are incorporated in the departmental standard TD 28/87 "Pedestrian Crossing; Pelican and Zebra Crossings". This introduced a two second extension to the crossing time, to be used at the discretion of the highway authority.

We are looking at ways in which extended crossing time can be made available specifically for elderly and disabled pedestrians.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the police and traffic authorities to encourage them to take measures to enforce motorists to respect pedestrian rights on zebra and pelican crossings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Enforcement of road traffic law is a matter for the police who have to decide on priorities in the light of local conditions. We are in regular contact with the Association of Chief Police Officers and local authority road safety officers on all matters relating to road safety.

All road users should have proper regard for pedestrians wherever they are, and should pay particular attention to rules 56-57 of the highway code.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on the phasing out of zebra crossings in favour of pelican crossings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have no such policy. Pelican and zebra crossings are used in different circumstances which reflect different pedestrian and traffic flows, and traffic speeds. Local highway authorities have considerable discretion over the installation of both types of crossing, although the Department of Transport issues guidance as to the most helpful criteria.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made with trials of new pedestrian facilities at traffic-signalled junctions including the use of infra-red devices to detect the presence and movement of pedestrians.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department is co-operating with its French and Dutch counterparts in a research programme to improve pedestrian facilities at traffic lights.

A trial site is to be set up later this year at the Department's Transport and Road Research Laboratory. Various new pedestrian facilities, including infra-red detectors, will be developed.

Consultation with highway authorities and other interested groups will be undertaken as part of this work.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report of the Transport and Road Research Laboratory on new techniques to identify sites for pelican crossings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The final report of the Transport and Road Research Laboratory's study into pedestrian crossing criteria is expected in mid-1990. In the meantime we shall be publishing later this year two reports on the relationship between pedestrian flows and accident rates, which are directly relevant to the problem.

In April this year we published a major package of measures aimed at improving pedestrian safety which we intend to implement as quickly as possible.

Rail Electrification

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any information as to whether British Rail has initiated research into the advantages and disadvantages of the electrification of the east midlands railway line.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that British Rail is co-operating closely with the consultants who produced the recent local authorities' report on the midland main line.

Aviation Security

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department issued any general aviation security warning on 21 December.

Mr. Channon: No.

Heavy Goods Trailers (Safety)

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the number of heavy goods trailers failing to pass the annual test.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There has been a rising trend in the number of trailers failing the annual test over the period 1983-1988. A task force of experts from the Department and the industry was set up to investigate the reasons for failure.

Their interim report has been placed in the Library of the House. A final report will be produced later this summer.

The trailer failure rate appears to be more related to changes in requirements over the period in consideration than to a decline in standards of maintenance of trailers on the road.

Interim recommendations are:

1. to develop an acceptable method of testing the braking performance of unladen trailers;
2. to explore the scope for increasing the service brake force within the upper limits of the European Community requirements;
3. to provide advice to operators on good maintenance practice;
4. to undertake regular surveys of random samples of goods vehicles and trailers in use.

DEFENCE

Compensation Claims

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many sick 10 certificates banning compensation claims for injury to members of the armed forces were issued each year from 1986 to date.

Mr. Neubert: It would not be possible, except at disproportionate cost, to produce details of certificates issued from 1986 to date under sections 10(1) and 10(2) of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has issued a total of 11 certificates during the time in question under section 10(3) of the Act: four in 1986, two in 1987, one in 1988 and four so far in 1989.

Skyguard (RAF Finningley)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications of the transit area in the surrounding area of RAF Finningley; and when Skyguard will be in operation in this area.

Mr. Neubert: The structure of the United Kingdom low flying system in the RAF Finningley area is, as elsewhere, designed to minimise the disturbance to the public. Skyguard is being deployed to assist the RAF police in their task of monitoring low flying in the United Kingdom. As with the general RAF police monitoring programme, however, it would not be appropriate to release details of proposed Skyguard deployments in advance.

Low Flying

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints he has received over the past 12 months about low-flying military aircraft; and what action he has taken.

Mr. Neubert: Between 1 June 1988 and 31 May 1989 the Ministry of Defence received 6,273 inquiries and complaints about military low-flying training in the United Kingdom. Each inquiry or complaint is carefully considered and appropriate action taken.

F111 Aircraft

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about the deployment of F111s in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend is currently on an official visit to the United States of America, where he will meet Mr. Cheney and discuss a range of issues of mutual interest.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if the proposal to station further F111 aircraft of the United States Air Force at RAF Upper Heyford is part of a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation decision-making process or a bilateral United States-United Kingdom decision-making process;

(2) on which date he was first informed of proposals to station further F111 aircraft of the United States Air Force at RAF Upper Heyford;

(3) what information he has received from the United States Government, or any service or agency answerable to that Government, regarding proposals to station further F111 aircraft of the United States Air Force at RAF Upper Heyford;

(4) whether in the light of the proposals made at the recent North Atlantic Treaty Organisation summit, there have been any changes to the proposal to station further F111 aircraft of the United States Air Force at RAF Upper Heyford.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave the hon. Members for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie), Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray), and for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on 13 June 1989 at columns *395-96*.

Defence Exports Services Organisation

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will indicate the annual salary of the head of the Defence Exports Services Organisation and the extent of the bonuses for which he could be eligible.

Mr. Sainsbury: The present head of the defence export services, Sir Colin Chandler, is on secondment from British Aerospace, which pays his salary. The Ministry of Defence pays British Aerospace the equivalent of grade 2 Civil Service salary for Sir Colin's services. There is no provision in these arrangements for the payment of bonuses. Mr. Alan Thomas will start taking over from Sir Colin Chandler as head of defence export services in early July and will assume total responsibility for the post in September. He was appointed at a salary of £100,000 a

year subject to annual review and he will be eligible for a performance bonus within an annual maximum of £25,000.

Nuclear Response Policy

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to make known to the Warsaw pact the circumstances in which he would agree to a nuclear response to a conventional attack upon Germany by a member of the Warsaw pact.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Queen's Birthday Parade (Horses)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the names and ages of the oldest and youngest horses taking part in this year's birthday parade; where each was bred; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: I regret that this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Stonehenge (Incident)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people were arrested by personnel from the Ministry of Defence police acting in support of the Wiltshire constabulary on the morning of 21 June; and how many of those arrested were charged.

Mr. Sainsbury: Thirty-seven arrests were made by the Ministry of Defence police in the course of operations in support of the Wiltshire constabulary. None of those arrested has yet been charged.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the use of personnel from the Ministry of Defence police in support of the Wiltshire constabulary in operations in the area of Stonehenge on the morning of 21 June.

Mr. Sainsbury: In accordance with the Ministry of Defence Police Act 1987 section 2(2)(d), Ministry of Defence police officers deployed in support of the Wiltshire constabulary in response to the latter force's specific requests of assistance.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what cost will be passed on to the Wiltshire constabulary for the use of personnel from the Ministry of Defence police on the morning of 21 June.

Mr. Sainsbury: Since members of the Ministry of Defence police were deployed in the Salisbury plain area in order to protect the property and other interests of my Department it would not be appropriate to make a charge for any assistance which was given to the Wiltshire constabulary in the course of those duties.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost to his Department for the use of personnel under the control of his Department in support of the operations by the Wiltshire constabulary in the area of Stonehenge on the morning of 21 June.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of personnel from the Ministry of Defence police deployed in support of the Wiltshire constabulary on the morning of 21 June.

Mr. Sainsbury: Approximately 75 Ministry of Defence police officers gave assistance to the Wiltshire constabulary during the night of 20-21 June.

United States Deep Space Programme

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received any proposals from the United States Air Force to station any electro-optical deep space surveillance equipment in the United Kingdom as part of the GEODSS programme, or any other programme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am not aware of any such proposals.

Boscombe Down Airfield

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list North Atlantic Treaty Organisation-funded construction in support of United States forces that has taken place at Boscombe Down airfield funded from each of the last five North Atlantic Treaty Organisation funding slices; and if he will list similar construction that is scheduled to be funded from future North Atlantic Treaty Organisation funding slices.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to publish information of this kind.

RAF Feltwell (Tracking Station)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current status of the proposed deep space tracking station at RAF Feltwell.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member on 3 February 1989 at column *449*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which portions of the electromagnetic spectrum will be used by the proposed deep space tracking station at RAF Feltwell.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to publish information of this kind.

US Central Command (Hythe)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 29 June 1988, *Official Report*, column *267*, if he will list in tabular form the quantities of materials that have been stored at Hythe, Hampshire, in support of United States Central Command in each of the last five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No materials have been stored at Hythe, Hampshire in support of the United States Central Command.

Wayne Beal

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many persons were recruited with Wayne Beal into 2nd Queen's Regiment; and how many completed the course.

Mr. Neubert: There were 32 others recruited along with Wayne Beal; 19 of these successfully completed the training course.

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will investigate why the adjutant turned away key witnesses at the court martial of those accused of bullying Wayne Beal.

Mr. Neubert: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will obtain and make available a transcript of the court martial proceedings in the case of those accused of bullying Wayne Beal of 2nd Queen's Regiment, Bassingbourne barracks.

Mr. Neubert: A transcript of the presiding judge advocate's summing-up will be made available as soon as possible.

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek a report on the reasons why an adjournment in the court martial of those accused of bullying Wayne Beal to enable medical evidence to be obtained was refused.

Mr. Neubert: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Nuclear-powered Warships Safety Committee

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members there are on the nuclear-powered warships safety committee; and how many of them had previously worked *(a)* full-time, *(b)* part-time and *(c)* on a commission basis for his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are currently 23 permanent members of the nuclear-powered warships safety committee (NPWSC), excluding the secretariat of two. Of these, five are currently employed full-time by this Department. A further seven MOD officials, who are not members of the committee, may attend or be represented at its meetings if the agenda includes items within their area of interest. Of the 18 external NPWSC members, five have previously worked as full-time MOD officials. The other external members have not worked for this Department, either part-time or on a commission basis.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how the running costs of the nuclear-powered warships safety committee are met.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The running costs of the NPWSC are met from public funds. In general, these costs are paid by the Ministry of Defence, although the expenses of the eight NPWSC members who are full-time employees of other public bodies are paid by their employers.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the membership of the nuclear-powered warships safety committee.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not considered appropriate to release the names of individual committee members, for reasons of personal security.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether members of the nuclear-powered warships safety committee receive payment or expenses for their work from his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Those members of the Nuclear-Powered Warships Safety Committee who are not employees of the Ministry of Defence or other public bodies receive a fee in line with those laid down in the scale of daily fees payable to members of Royal Commissions, advisory committees and similar bodies. All members may claim travel and subsistence expenses.

Ha'burn (Sinking)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the circumstances surrounding the sinking of the fishing boat Ha'burn in the Firth of Clyde.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On the morning of Friday 30 June the fishing vessel Ha'burn, while fishing in the Clyde approaches, caught a mine-like object in its nets. The vessel informed HM Coastguard and proceeded to Troon on the Ayrshire coast. The Royal Navy base at Faslane was also informed, and an explosive ordnance disposal team was despatched to the scene and indentified the object as a German world war II ground mine.

The skipper of the Ha'burn agreed to take the mine to deep water, where the Royal Navy team were to dispose of it by a controlled explosion. When the vessel had reached a suitable location, a demolition charge was attached to the mine which was then lowered to the sea bed. A safety fuse was set and the vessel began to retire to safety. The charge, however, detonated prematurely and before the Ha'burn had time to clear the area.

The vessel was holed by the resulting explosion and later beached some 500 yards from Great Cumbrae island. The crew, who were unhurt, were rescued by an inshore lifeboat from Largs. A board of inquiry has been convened. The owners of the Ha'burn have been informed of the procedures for submitting a claim for compensation.

Birkbeck College

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment of security at Birkbeck college was made prior to awarding the contract for the study of the recruitment and selection of Royal Navy personnel to the college.

Mr. Sainsbury: Since the work is not classified the question of security at Birkbeck college did not arise.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current security classification of the contract awarded to Birkbeck college for the study of the recruitment and selection of Royal Navy personnel.

Mr. Sainsbury: The work in question is unclassified.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made to the security procedures concerning documents relating to the contract awarded to Birkbeck college for the study of the recruitment and selection of Royal Navy personnel since the contract was awarded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. Papers were returned when they were no longer needed in accordance with normal procedures.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communication there has been between the governors of Birkbeck college and his Department concerning the security of documents relating to the contract for the study of the recruitment and selection of Royal Navy personnel awarded to the college.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. Following the letter which the master of the college wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on Monday 3 July 1989, my noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement met her on Tuesday 4 July 1989, but this was to discuss recent press reports.

Corporal Steven Smith

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about the death of Corporal Steven Smith in Hanover; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Two under-car improvised explosive devices were placed under private vehicles belonging to service men, which were left-hand drive and carried United Kingdom type civilian number plates issued for use by the British Forces in Germany, and were parked in a married quarters area in Hanover. One device exploded at 18.15 hours local time on 2 July 1989, causing the death of Corporal Smith and injuries to his wife and four children. The second device was located and neutralised. Both were attached to the cars by magnets.

The Provisional IRA has claimed responsibility for both the devices. The German police are continuing their inquiries.

Security (West Germany)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what security arrangements are made for those service personnel who do not live inside Ministry of Defence barracks or bases whilst stationed in West Germany.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All service men, United Kingdom-based civilians and their dependants are briefed periodically on the security situation and on the measures they should take for their own protection. It would not be appropriate to comment on individual security measures. Close liaison is also maintained with the Federal German authorities, who have primary responsibility for the prevention of terrorist crimes outside United Kingdom bases.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any areas in West Germany outside Ministry of Defence bases or barracks have ever been the subject of a co-ordinated test and evaluation of security.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The security of off-base married quarter areas in Germany is kept under constant review, in liaison with the appropriate local police authorities.

Iraq (Aircraft Sales)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the Government's policy on the sale of Hawk aircraft to the Government of Iraq.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been the consistent practice of successive Administrations not to comment on individual defence sales. Any overseas sale of Hawk would require an export licence and any prospect of such a sale to Iraq would be considered against the guidelines announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on 29 October 1985 at column *450*.

Army Polo Teams

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence,, if he will list those regiments in which regimental officers are required to make a regular subscription towards the regimental polo team.

Mr. Neubert: No officer is required to subscribe towards his regimental polo team.

IUKADGE Command and Control System

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 26 June, how long the delay in introducing the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment command and control system will be.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* As I stated in my reply to the hon. Gentleman's question of 26 June at column *370*, it is premature to speculate on the length of further delay to the introduction of the IUKADGE command and control system before the results of the independent audit have been assessed. We consider, however, that it should be possible to complete the work in the early 1990s.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 26 June, when it was decided to seek maximum return from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation common infrastructure budget for the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment command and control system by abiding by the rules of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation international competitive bidding.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* September 1978.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what additional costs have been incurred as a result of the delay to the introduction of the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment command and control system.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* The delay to the introduction of the IUKADGE command and control system will have some small cost implications, due for example to the need to run on the existing command and control system for somewhat longer than originally intended. The main contract with United Kingdom Systems Ltd is, however, fixed price; the financial risks for the completion of the ICCS continue, therefore, to lie with the contractor.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what organisation is carrying out the independent audit and review of the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment command and control system.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* The independent audit of the IUKADGE command and control system is being carried out by a joint industry/MOD team led by SD Scicon Ltd.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the independent audit and review of the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment command and control system will be completed.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* The independent audit of the IUKADGE command and control system was completed at the end of June and will be fully assessed during the next few weeks.

WALES

Urban Investment Grant

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the planned expenditure for urban investment grant for each of the next three years.

Mr. Grist: The provision for 1989-90 is £3 million (as shown in the supply estimates class XVII, vote 6 subhead B2). I have made no firm decisions on the distribution of the block resources beyond 1989-90.

Business Establishment Grant

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many companies in receipt of a cash grant from his Department to establish a business in Wales have discontinued such business within five years of establishment.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information in the form requested is not available. However, it is possible to provide information on companies which have received regional selective assistance. Since the introduction of the current guidelines for regional selective assistance in November 1984, two companies which received RSA towards establishing new businesses in Wales are known to have discontinued such business. These companies received some £20,000 in grant. Over the same period 80 projects received RSA to establish new businesses in Wales with associated expenditure to date of some £9 million.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if his civil servants discussed with the Welsh Development Agency's west Wales senior executive management buy-out plans; and if he will make a statement.

(2) if the Welsh Development Agency has had any discussions with outside consultants regarding the proposed privatisation of the Welsh Development Agency's west Wales region; if he will publish the consultants' names; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: There have been no such discussions.

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he is taking to control the spread of rhododendron in Forestry Commission and private woodland in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Forestry Commission controls rhododendron on its own land, where it is significantly affecting tree growth, by cutting and by application of herbicides. Owners of private woodlands are given advice on methods of controlling rhododendron, and the Commission is carrying out research into alternative methods of control, including methods of limiting regrowth after cutting.

Child Care Facilities

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he is taking to encourage the provision of child care facilities in the workplace in Wales; what information he has on how many firms and Government offices currently provide these facilities in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: New Government initiatives on child care provision were announced on 11 April by my hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Home Affairs, including measures to encourage employers to provide child care facilities using the tax reliefs available to them. No information is available on the provision of child care facilities by employers in Wales.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes a promotional campaign to sell Welsh water authority shares abroad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am considering how best to sell Welsh water authority shares so that privatisation will give the people of Wales the best possible opportunity to own Welsh Water.

Cervical Smears

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average time taken by each Welsh health authority to process cervical smear tests and provide the results for the patient and her general practitioner; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Information for 1988-89 is currently being collected by the Department from Welsh health authorities. I shall write to my hon. Friend once the results have been collated.

BSE—Infected Cattle

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy-infected cattle, at non-European Economic Community-approved slaughterhouses in Wales, have been identified.

Mr. Peter Walker: Four cases have been reported of which two proved positive and one negative; on the other one the result of testing is still awaited.

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total available funding for 1989-90 for supporting voluntary organisations in Wales in the social services field under section 64 of the Health Service and Public Health Act 1968; and what was the corresponding figure in each of the previous three years.

Mr. Grist: The information is as follows:

Year	*£*
1986-87	1,126,202
1987-88	1,145,680
1988-89	1,133,998
1989-90	1,696,653

Funds for voluntary organisations in the social services field are also available under section 26 of the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976. The figures are as follows:

Year	£
1986-87	594,616
1987-88	725,049
1988-89	811,527
1989-90	965,245

ENVIRONMENT

Lawn Tennis Federation Cup

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide support to Nottingham for the running of the 1991 Lawn Tennis Federation cup.

Mr. Moynihan: All Government funds in direct support of sport are channelled through the Sports Council. Any requests for support for the running costs of the Federation cup should be addressed to the council.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the county councils which have made representations to him arising from his consultation paper regarding the role and functions of waste disposal authorities; and what views were expressed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Representations have been received from the following county councils:

County of Avon
Bedfordshire County Council
Royal County of Berkshire
Buckinghamshire County Council
Cambridgeshire County Council
Cheshire County Council
Cleveland County Council
Cumbria County Council
Derbyshire County Council
Durham County Council
East Sussex County Council
Essex County Council
Gloucestershire County Council
Hampshire County Council
Hereford and Worcester County Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Isle of Wight County Council
Kent County Council
Lancashire County Council
Lincolnshire County Council
Norfolk County Council
Northamptonshire County Council
Northumberland County Council
North Yorkshire County Council
Nottinghamshire County Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Shropshire County Council
Somerset County Council
Staffordshire County Council
Suffolk County Council
Surrey County Council
West Sussex County Council
Warwickshire County Council
Wiltshire County Council

The authorities expressed a range of views on the various issues raised in the consultation paper. These, and very many other responses, are being carefully considered.

Paper

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the use of non-recycled stationery, packaging and printed reports within his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department's policy is progressively to increase the use of recycled stationery.

Smoking

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has evaluated the effect of smoking on environmental pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No formal evaluation of the effects of smoking on environmental pollution has been undertaken, but preliminary estimates suggest that overall it has very little impact. It is, however, recognised that smoking can contribute to pollution of the indoor environment, and the Government encourage the implementation of voluntary no-smoking policies. In addition, where banning smoking is appropriate for particular safety or hygiene reasons, the Government have not hesitated to take action.

Aquatic Environment

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to reduce the inputs of red list substances to the aquatic environment; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 10 April to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) at column *405*.

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made towards establishing the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre as an executive agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I am pleased to announce that the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre will today become an executive agency of the Property Services Agency.

The centre provides secure conference facilities for national and international Government meetings up to the highest level. It also markets its facilities commercially, competing for business on quality and price with a wide range of public and private undertakings, both at home and overseas. The centre has already achieved a great deal since it opened in 1986. Establishing it as an agency will give it additional management tools to develop its business further on increasingly commercial lines, and the scope to compete even more effectively in a highly competitive national and international market.

The centre will be expected to reduce progressively its net cost to the Exchequer. To this end I have set progressively more demanding targets against which its future progress and performance will be assessed. Peat Marwick McLintock management consultants have been commissioned to undertake a full review of the centre's performance since it opened, and to consider the

possibilities for further improvements in the future. They have been asked to advise on specific targets and performance indicators. Their recommendations will influence the Government's decisions on financial and other targets for incorporation in the corporate plan and business planning process. Meanwhile I have instructed the centre chief executive to seek to increase controllable revenue and decrease expenditure each by 2½ per cent. per annum compared with the centre's previous forecast so as to produce a surplus before interest, depreciation and rates of £50,000 in 1989-90, £200,000 in 1990-91 and £320,000 in 1991-92.

Mr. Roy Kendrick, who has been responsible as general manager for the successful development of the centre's business since its opening, has been appointed chief executive of the new agency. I wish him and his staff every success in their continuing endeavours.

Copies of the framework document are being placed in the Library of the House.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conditions he places on newly appointed members of the London Docklands development corporation in respect of the participation of firms with which they are associated in developments in the area of the corporation.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave on 22 February to the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) at column *704*.

Acer Pseudoplatanus

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he classifies Acer Pseudoplatanus as an indigenous species for the purposes of his Department's policies.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Acer Pseudoplatanus is regarded as a species that is naturalised but is not indigenous.

Refrigerators (Disposal)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is aware of any examples of good practice by local authorities in the United Kingdom, concerning the safe disposal of refrigerators and freezers so as to minimize the release of chlorofluorocarbons into the atmosphere during their disposal.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

Several local authorities have set up schemes for the collection of discarded refrigerators and freezers with a view to recovering, recycling or disposing of the CFCs they contain. Officials in the Department of the Environment are considering whether advice to local authorities in this area would be appropriate.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received concerning the introduction of safe disposal sites for refrigerators and freezers.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

I have received representations from companies and members of the public about the risk of CFCs escaping from discarded refrigerators and freezers. There are however technical and logistical difficulties in recovering and recycling CFCs from domestic refrigerator coolant systems, and from the accompanying foam insulation. Together these account for only around 3 per cent. of total CFCs in use in the United Kingdom.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much has been paid to *(a)* employment training agents and *(b)* employment training managers under the underpinning arrangements since the inception of the scheme to the latest available date; and if he will make a statement about his future policy on underpinning arrangements.

Mr. Nicholls: So far some £0·67 million has been paid to training agents and £19·38 million to training managers under underpinning arrangements up to and including May 1989.

Underpinning was based on original profiles of training agent action plans/training manager starts, constructed prior to the commencement of employment training. From September 1989 training agents/training managers will be able to make a much more accurate judgment of likely throughput in the light of experience on the programme to date. It is therefore envisaged that underpinning payments will no longer be required.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much his Department has paid out to employment training trainees in the form of training bonus since the start of the scheme to the latest possible date; and how much of that has been paid because either *(a)* the trainee obtained a vocational qualification and *(b)* the trainee completed a part of the action plan.

Mr. Nicholls: To the end of May 1989 the Training Agency had paid out £105,000 in training bonuses.

It is not possible to identify separately the proportion of funds paid in respect of *(a)* vocational qualifications obtained and *(b)* action plans completed.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average payment of benefit plus the additional £10 per trainee on employment training at the latest available date; how many employment training trainees are on placement with employers; how many employment training trainees had left the programme earlier than planned; how many employment training trainees had left to take up jobs; and how many employment training trainees had become unemployed when they left.

Mr. Nicholls: The average weekly training allowance including the training premium is estimated to be around £50 per trainee on employment training.

The number of employment training trainees on placements with employers was estimated to be 45,000 on 16 June, the latest date for which information is available. Reliable information broken down as requested about trainees who have left the programme is not available.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of employment training places available for each training agency area; and what were the number of places filled for each training agency area on the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Nicholls: There is no information at present about the number of available places at Training Agency area office level. The information will be available later in the year. The information requested for filled places is given in the table:

Employment training: filled places at 23 June 1989

Area office	*Number*
Yorkshire and Humberside Region	
Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees	4,541
Humberside	5,170
North Yorkshire and Leeds	4,393
Sheffield and Rotherham	5,464
Wakefield, Doncaster and Barnsley	5,436
North West Region	
Cheshire	3,040
Cumbria	1,399
Lancashire	4,203
Central Manchester	4,133
Greater Manchester North	2,710
Greater Manchester East	2,536
Merseyside	9,047
Northern Region	
Cleveland	6,283
County Durham	5,439
Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle	4,650
Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead	6,394
Wales	
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	4,376
Gwent	2,253
Gwynned, Clwyd and Powys	3,200
Mid and South Glamorgan	4,891
Scotland	
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	3,113
Central and Fife	2,862
Glasgow City	4,731
Grampian and Tayside	2,607
Highlands and Islands	1,010
Lanarkshire	2,567
Lothian and Borders	3,437
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	2,769
South East Region	
Berkshire and Oxfordshire	1,250
Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire	1,708
Essex	1,741
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	2,134
Kent	2,022
Surrey	475
Sussex	1,868
London Region	
Inner London North	5,920
Inner London South	3,356
London East	2,286
London North	3,680
London South	1,693
London West	1,219
South West Region	
Avon	2,646
Devon and Cornwall	5,642
Dorset and Somerset	1,868
Gloucester and Wiltshire	1,640
West Midlands Region	
Birmingham and Solihull	7,592
Coventry and Warwickshire	2,661
Dudley and Sandwell	2,939
Staffordshire	3,668
The Marches, Hereford/Worcester	2,690
Wolverhampton and Walsall	3,171
East Midlands and Eastern Region	
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	1,684
Derbyshire	2,938
Leicestershire and Northamptonshire	2,832

Area office	Number
Lincolnshire	1,375
Norfolk and Suffolk	3,223
Nottinghamshire	3,393

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the level of expenditure so far spent on ET *(a)* in total, *(b)* advertising which mentions companies participating in ET through the large contractors unit and *(c)* *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 22 June 1989]:* Total expenditure on *(a)* employment training (ET) in the seven months to March 1989 was £423·6 million.

Expenditure on *(b)* poster, press and television advertising which mentions companies participating in ET was £3·1 million in the same period. *(b)* is 0·7 per cent. of *(a)*.

Three of the six companies mentioned in the television advertising are involved in ET at area office level and not through the LCU.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the most recent details of *(a)* the number of filled places on the 23 large company ET schemes listed in the *Official Report*, 27 February, column *34*, *(b)* any changes to the maximum number of places allocated for each of those schemes and *(c)* which of those schemes have since withdrawn from ET.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 4 July 1989]:* The table updates to 26 May 1989 the details of the 23 large company ET schemes listed in the *Official Report*, 27 February, column *34*.

The maximum number of places allocated column shows, in brackets, the changes to the figures listed in the *Official Report*.

None of the schemes listed has withdrawn from employment training.

Company	Maximum Number of places Allocated		Places filled at 26 May 1989
J. Jarvis and Sons	2,496	(−430)	924
J. Laing Construction	2,178	(−160)	1,032
Henry Boot Construction	569	(−381)	185
Invicta Training (Grand Metropolitan Catering)	715	(−160)	316
Martin James	640	(− 95)	482
Geo. Wimpey	547	(−119)	202
Mowlem	405		138
Comet PLC	374		42
Pilkington	270	(− 30)	226
Ferranti	215	(− 35)	115
Mill Garages Ltd.	170	(− 10)	118
Tower Radio Ltd.	250		108
Portals Engineering Ltd.	250		219
Marley Extrusions Ltd.	200		
Ryder Ltd.	150		148
Team Greyfriars Ltd.	200		175
John Lawrence Group	150		32
ICI	100	(− 50)	74
Sumlock Business Services	90	(− 60)	24
R and D Associates	125	(− 33)	144
Simon Engineering	110		66
Coastline Ltd.	70	(− 30)	67
Strategic Marketing International Ltd.	100		66
	100		66

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment training training managers there are *(a)* nationally and *(b)* by Training Agency area; and how many are receiving subsidies above the basic grant per trainee.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 26 June 1989]:* There are currently 1,251 employment training (ET) training managers. The number of training managers in each Training Agency area is given in the table. Training managers do not receive subsidies but are paid grants to provide training.

	Numbers
Scotland	
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	34
Central and Fife	34
Glasgow City	40
Grampian and Tayside	23
Highlands and Islands	14
Lanarkshire	28
Lothian and Borders	27
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	33
Northern	
Cleveland	38
County Durham	30
Newcastle	37
South Tyne	43
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Bradford, Kirklees and Calderdale	17
Humberside	34
Leeds and North Yorkshire	36
Sheffield and Rotherham	23
Wakefield, Barnsley and Doncaster	21
North West	
Cheshire	27
Cumbria	8
Greater Manchester Central	30
Greater Manchester East	11
Greater Manchester North	24
Lancashire	26
Merseyside	31
West Midlands	
Birmingham and Solihull	29
Coventry and Warwickshire	10
Dudley and Sandwell	18
Staffordshire	20
The Marches	12
Wolverhampton and Walsall	13
East Midlands and Eastern	
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	12
Derbyshire	21
Leicestershire and Northamptonshire	27
Lincolnshire	8
Norfolk and Suffolk	18
Nottinghamshire	20
Wales	
Cardiff	38
Gwent	21
Swansea	43
Wrexham	29
South West	
Avon	20
Devon and Cornwall	20
Gloucester and Wiltshire	14
Somerset and Dorset	15
South East	
Chatham	9
Chelmsford	15
Fareham	11
High Wycombe	12
Reading	11

	Numbers
Sussex	12
Woking	6
London	
Inner London North	27
Inner London South	25
London East	13
London North	12
London South	11
London West	10
Total	1,251

Training (Redundancy Payments)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much money has been reimbursed to *(a)* community programme agents and sponsors, *(b)* employment training training managers and *(c)* employment training training agents for redundancy payments during the period from 1 September 1988, up to the most recently available date.

Mr. Nicholls: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The amounts of money reimbursed for redundancy payments from 1 September 1988 up to and including May 1989, are as follows:

(a) Community programme agents and sponsors—£1·961 million.

(b) Employment training (ET) training.

and

(c) Managers and training agents—£0·138 million.

Disablement Resettlement Officers

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether disablement resettlement officers are encouraged to make direct referrals, where appropriate, of disabled people to Finchdale, Portland, Queen Elizabeth's and St. Loyes' residential training colleges.

Mr. Lee: Disablement resettlement officers consider the individual training needs of their clients. Where these needs can be most appropriately met by one of the four residential training colleges, they are able to make a direct referral to the relevant college.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the overall budget of the Disablement Advisory Service; what proportion of the budget is devoted to promoting the service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 6 June 1989]:* Information about the overall cost of the Disablement Advisory Service (DAS) is not available. In 1988-89, approximately £341,000 was spent on leaflets, videos, advertisements, exhibitions etc. promoting services and schemes, including the DAS, to encourage and assist the employment of people with disabilities. In addition, DAS staff make direct approaches to employers to promote its objectives, services etc.

Tourism

Mr. Bevan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, if he has concluded his review of tourism policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: I announced last July that I was reviewing those aspects of tourism policy for which I am responsible —the promotion of Britain overseas, and the promotion and development of tourism in England.

I have concluded that the present organisation needs to be simplified and that the industry should be more directly engaged. Government financial support for the promotion of tourism should continue, but this needs to be more sharply focused.

Within the framework of the 1969 Development of Tourism Act, I intend to work closely with the chairman and members of the British Tourist Authority (BTA) and the English tourist board (ETB), and with the chairmen of the regional tourist boards in England to make changes along these lines, to improve cost-effectiveness and to extend partnerships with the industry. Accordingly, I am asking the BTA to ensure that greater authority is devolved to its overseas regions. I shall expect the BTA to work even more closely with industry in overseas markets, and to move some of its operations into the private sector. The present head office structure should, as a consequence of these various changes, be slimmed down.

I will also expect the ETB to devolve many of its activities and direct substantially more of its funding to the regional tourist boards under a form of contract, targeting that support especially to regions where the private sector most needs such support. This would enable the RTB's to increase their marketing activities and their direct involvement in encouraging the development of tourism locally. I would expect the regional boards to use such funds as a lever to achieve further private sector participation. I shall also expect the ETB to move into the private sector activities for which that is appropriate. The ETB will continue to play an important co-ordinating role but, as a consequence of these changes, I shall clearly expect a reduction in the scale of its activity at the centre.

On 30 January, I announced the suspension of the section 4 scheme of financial assistance for tourism projects in England, pending the outcome of my review more generally. In the second half of 1988 investment completed or underway on major tourism projects in England were some £2·5 billion. Accordingly I believe that the future prosperity and growth of tourism no longer depends on this scheme. No new offers of financial assistance will therefore be made under the scheme in England. Fees for applications held over since the suspension will be returned, and all offers of assistance already made will be honoured, subject to the conditions of offer being met.

Tourism is now worth some £19 billion annually to the United Kingdom economy and the Government remain committed to this important industry.

Remploy

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the reports to the Remploy board of directors which recommended the closure of the Rutherglen factory and the transfer of the work force to the Clydebank factory.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* The board of Remploy is responsible for making decisions relating to the day to day business of the company. The information requested is commercial and confidential to the board.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the number of disabled employees made redundant by Remploy in the last 10 years.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* I am informed by Remploy that no disabled employees have been made redundant by the company in the last 10 years.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Domestic Violence

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with whom he has had discussions regarding the Home Office publication on domestic violence; and what conclusions have been reached.

Mr. John Patten: Home Office research study No. 107 "Domestic Violence: An overview of the literature" will be discussed at the next meeting of the ministerial group on women's issues. This will take place on 20 July.

Broadcasting

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to representations about basing Channel 5 in Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We see considerable merit in Channel 5 being based outside London.

Commission for Racial Equality

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will consider the appointment of a member of the black and minority ethnic communities as chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality when the position becomes due for reappointment;

(2) if he will publish a breakdown of commissioners in the Commission for Racial Equality in terms of ethnic group;

(3) if he will publish a breakdown of staff in the Commission for Racial Equality in terms of grades and ethnic group;

(4) what is the period of the appointment of the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality; and when it comes up for renewal;

(5) what is the present remuneration of the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality;

(6) what representations he has received from commissioners of the Commission for Racial Equality or others regarding the number of people from black and minority ethnic groups in senior positions; and if he will make a statement;

(7) what steps he is taking to increase the representation of black and minority ethnic communities in the Commission for Racial Equality at senior grades;

(8) when he expects next to meet the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality; and what will they discuss;

(9) whether he will place in the Library a copy of the Commission for Racial Equality equal opportunities statement and policy.

Mr. John Patten: The chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality is appointed for five years. The appointment of the present chairman, whose current remuneration is £45,315 per annum, expires on 31 January 1993. When the time comes, candidates from the ethnic minority communities will undoubtedly be among those considered for this important post.

The current ethnic distribution of the commission and its staff is as follows:

	Afro-Caribbean or African	*Asian*	*Other*	*White*
As at 30 June 1989				
Commissioner	3	6·0	—	5·0
Chief executive	—	—	—	1·0
Director	—	1·0	—	3·0
Principal	1	5·0	—	9·0
SEO	8	4·0	—	23·5
HEO	24	13·0	5	16·0
EO	9	6·5	1	7·0
Graphic designer	—	—	—	1·0
AO	16	7·0	—	4·0
AA	6	—	—	2·0
Typing manager	1	—	—	—
SPS	2	—	—	—
PS	7	2·0	1	2·0
Typist	10	0·5	—	5·0
Messenger	1	—	—	2·0

Responsibility for the staffing of the commission lies not with the Secretary of State but with the commission itself. I am placing a copy of its equal opportunities statement in the Library. The commission is, I know, keen to improve representation of the black and other ethnic minority communities at senior grades. My right hon. Friend has received three letters about the staffing of the CRE. While, like the commission itself, we hope to see more black and other ethnic minority appointments, we do not judge the effectiveness of the commission's work for racial equality simply in terms of the ethnic composition of its staff.

My right hon. Friend expects to meet the chairman shortly to discuss current issues of mutual concern. I will be meeting the chairman and other commissioners at a commission on 25 July.

Data Protection Act

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Sussex police as to the action he has taken to delete material collected on computer relating to the 1988 Conservative party conference in accordance with the Data Protection Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. This is an operational matter for the chief constable of Sussex police.

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the level of combustion of *(a)* unleaded petrol and *(b)* leaded petrol; what are the implications for the control of petrol fires; what are the implications of the increasing use of unleaded petrol for the type of equipment and appliances required by the fire service; and whether these are being made available.

Mr. John Patten: I am advised that the combustion characteristics of both are identical. Users of unleaded

petrol are therefore at no greater risk from fire. I am satisfied that fire brigades are adequately equipped to deal with petrol fires.

Police Communications

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the improvement of police communications by employing the use of a space satellite; if he has explored the possibility of co-operation with his counterparts in other member countries of the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As part of its programme of work aimed at improving police communications, the Department keeps under active review the costs and benefits of using satellites, either on a United Kingdom or a European basis. Our present view is that such a development is not yet either a practical or an economic proposition, but a further review of the use of this technology for police communications is about to be undertaken.

Immigration

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of immigration appeals currently waiting to be heard in Scotland.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 4 July at column *113*.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many European Economic Community nationals have settled in the United Kingdom since 1973.

Mr. Renton: European Community nationals wishing to reside in the United Kingdom benefit from certain provisions of Community law. They may apply for settlement after a period of temporary residence in the United Kingdom. Over the period 1973-88, a total of 41,000 European Community nationals (excluding citizens of the Republic of Ireland) were accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any central record is maintained of the numbers of European Economic Community nationals or nationals of overseas territories of European Economic Community states who come to the United Kingdom and do not depart; and if he has any information of the numbers involved.

Mr. Renton: No detailed central record is kept of EC nationals entering or leaving the United Kingdom. However, sample information from the international passenger survey suggests that about 7 million EC nationals entered the United Kingdom in 1988, and of these about 30,000 intended to stay for a year or more.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any restrictions are placed on persons admitted for settlement to European Economic Community nations and then awarded citizenship who enter, and remain to work, in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: All EC nations (except, for a transitional period, Spanish and Portuguese nationals) have the right under Community law to work or seek work in other member states. No distinction is made in Community law between persons born with EC nationality and those who acquire it later.

Broadcasting

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to give powers to the Independent Broadcasting Authority to be able to prevent the involvement in television companies which it regulates, of individuals found to be unfit to hold a television broadcasting licence in other countries.

Mr. Renton: The IBA is not bound by regulatory decisions in other jurisdictions in carrying out its functions under the Broadcasting Act 1981. We are considering what enforcement powers will be needed by the Independent Television Commission, which we have proposed should take over from the IBA.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects to meet representatives of the broadcasting authorities; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

Mr. Renton: I meet representatives from the broadcasting authorities regularly in order to discuss a wide variety of topics in which they have an interest.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Late Sittings

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many times to date the House of Commons has sat beyond midnight during the current parliamentary session; and what are the comparable figures for each parliamentary year from 1979 to date.

Mr. Wakeham: Tuesday 4 July was the 135th sitting day of this Session, and up to and including that date, the House had sat beyond midnight 48 times. The figures for the same point in previous Sessions since 1979 are as follows:

	Number
1979-80	49
1980-81	54
1981-82	42
1982-83	[1]33
1983-84	46
1984-85	60
1985-86	57
1986-87	[2]37
1987-88	57

[1] Short Session: 115 sitting days.
[2] Short Session: 109 sitting days.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Disabled Persons

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will amend section 4 of the Building (Prescribed Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (N.I.) 1983 to

provide that all building works designed to secure the greater health, safety, welfare or convenience of disabled persons, within their own homes, and in public places and buildings, continue to receive exemption from payment of plan fees and inspection fees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: It is not necessary to amend building regulations to provide exemption from fees for building work carried out to dwellings, or buildings to which the public are admitted, solely for the benefit of disabled people. Regulation 6A of the Building (Prescribed Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1982 (SR 1982 No. 392) already provides that exemption.

Building Regulations

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what are the total numbers of *(a)* plan fees and *(b)* inspection fees that were paid to each district council in Northern Ireland under the Building (Prescribed Fees) Regulations (NI) 1982 in each year since 1 January 1983, in respect of (i) buildings to which members of the public are admitted, whether on payment or otherwise, (ii) public dwellings, (iii) private dwellings and (iv) other buildings;

(2) what are the total numbers of applications for exemption of payment of *(a)* plan fees and *(b)* inspection fees, refused for each district council area in Northern Ireland under the Building (Prescribed Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 1983 in each year since 1 January 1984, in respect of (i) buildings to which members of the public are admitted, whether on payment or otherwise, (ii) public authority dwellings, (iii) private dwellings and (iv) other buildings;

(3) what are the total numbers of exemptions from payment of *(a)* plan fees and *(b)* inspection fees, granted for each district council area in Northern Ireland under the Building (Prescribed Fees) Regulations (NI) 1983 in each year since 1 January 1984, in respect of (i) buildings to which members of the public are admitted, whether on payment or otherwise, (ii) public authority dwellings, (iii) private dwellings and (iv) other buildings;

(4) what are the total values of *(a)* plan fees and *(b)* inspection fees that were paid to each district council in Northern Ireland under the Building (Prescribed Fees) Regulations (NI) 1982 in each year since 1 January 1983, in respect of (i) buildings to which members of the public are admitted, whether on payment or otherwise, (ii) public authority dwellings, (iii) private dwellings and (iv) other buildings;

(5) what are the total values of applications for exemption of payment of *(a)* plan fees and *(b)* inspection fees refused for each district council area in Northern Ireland under the Building (Prescribed Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 1983 in each year since 1 January 1984 in respect of (i) buildings to which members of the public are admitted, whether on payment or otherwise, (ii) public authority dwellings, (iii) private dwellings and (iv) other buildings;

(6) what are the total values of exemptions from payment of *(a)* plan fees and *(b)* inspection fees granted under the Building (Prescribed Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 1983 in each year since 1 January 1984 in respect of (i) buildings to which members of the public are admitted, whether on payment or otherwise, (ii) public authority dwellings, (iii) private dwellings and (iv) other buildings.

Mr. Needham: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Youth Training Programme

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many fatalities, major injuries and minor injuries occurred to those in YTP schemes since the programme's inception to the latest date *(a)* for each year and *(b)* the total.

Mr. Viggers: The figures are as follows:

	Fatalities	*Major injuries*	*Minor injuries*	*Total*
September 1982-December 1982	—	4	33	37
January 1983-December 1983	—	16	73	89
January 1984-December 1984	—	11	81	92
January 1985-December 1985	—	17	118	135
January 1986-December 1986	—	31	207	238
Janaury 1987-December 1987	—	42	199	241
January 1988-December 1988	1	30	162	193
January 1989-December 1989	—	13	71	84
Total	1	164	944	1,109

Benefit (Young People)

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many young people have been refused benefit after making an application under the severe hardship rule.

Mr. Needham: Twelve during the period 12 September 1988 to 30 June 1989.

Graduates

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the total number of graduates in employment as a percentage of all in employment for each of the years 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Viggers: Estimates from labour force surveys in Northern Ireland are as shown in the table:

Graduates of working age[1] in employment as a percentage of all in employment (at spring of each year)

	Percentage
1984	5·1
1985	5·4
1986	6·0
1987	5·8

[1] Men aged 16-64, women aged 16-59. Graduates can only be identified for these age groups.

Coats Viyella

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial assistance has been received by the Coats Viyella plant in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 26 June 1989]:* Coats Viyella has 10 manufacturing plants within the textiles and clothing sector in Northern Ireland employing 3,600 people. In the 1988-89 financial year financial assistance totalling £5,556,670 was paid to the CV group.

Shipbuilding (Redundancies)

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of redundancies in the shipbuilding and ship repair industries in Northern Ireland during the period 1 January 1979 to 31 December 1988.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* The total number of redundancies during this period at Harland and Wolff was some 6,000.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Fun Eating at School Today Campaign

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the local education authorities currently participating in the Fun Eating at School Today campaign.

Mr. Butcher: The information requested is as follows:

England and Wales
- Avon
- Bedfordshire
- Berkshire
- Birmingham
- Bolton
- Bradford
- Bury
- Calderdale
- Cambridge
- Cheshire
- Clwyd
- Cornwall
- Coventry
- Croydon
- Cumbria
- Devon
- Doncaster
- Dudley
- Enfield
- Essex
- Gateshead
- Gloucester
- Haringey
- Hillingdon
- Hounslow
- ILEA
- Isle of Wight
- Kirklees
- Knowsley
- Leicestershire
- Lincoln
- Newham
- Northamptonshire
- Northumberland
- North Yorkshire
- Nottingham
- Redbridge
- Richmond
- Rochdale
- Sandwell
- Sheffield
- Solihull
- Somerset
- South Tyneside
- St. Helens
- Staffordshire
- Suffolk
- Surrey
- Sutton
- Tameside
- Wakefield
- Waltham Forest
- Warwickshire
- Wigan
- Wiltshire
- Wolverhampton

Scotland
- Borders
- Central
- Dumfries
- Fife
- Glamorgan
- Highland
- Lothian
- Orkney
- Shetland
- Strathclyde
- Tayside
- Western Isles

Northern Ireland
- Armagh
- Belfast
- County Antrim
- South East Board

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of the Fun Eating at School Today campaign.

Mr. Butcher: Since joining the FEAST campaign this year, the participating local authorities have noted an increase in pupil take-up of school meals, in contrast to the decline of recent years. This is encouraging evidence that pupils can be attracted by a quality service.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to review the success of the Fun Eating at School Today campaign.

Mr. Butcher: This is for the organisers to do. My right hon. Friend will, however, watch with interest the results of this excellent initiative, which is promoting healthy eating habits among school children.

Consumer Education

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the effect of EEC Commission proposals for the promotion of innovation and for consumer education in United Kingdom secondary education.

Mr. Jackson: Responsibility for secondary education rests with member states, and not with the European Community. The Commission's proposals for the promotion of innovation in secondary education have yet to be considered in detail by member states, although in general they correspond with the thrust of current domestic policies in secondary education. The Commission's recent report on consumer education in secondary education does not conflict with the Government's current education or consumer policies.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what criteria he would use to evaluate a proposal to turn into a city technology college a school which has already been refused grant-maintained status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has not received, and has no grounds for expecting to receive, any such proposal. Any proposal for the establishment of a city technology college in a particular set of premises would be considered on its merits.

South Park School, Lincoln

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received any proposals to turn South Park school, Lincoln, into a city technology college; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has received no such proposals.

School Governors

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many governors have been removed from governing bodies prior to the expected end of their term of office *(a)* during the current year and *(b)* before the current year.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authority appointed governors there are in each of the local education authorities in England and Wales.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department of Education and Science does not collect details of the precise number of local education authority appointed governors within each authority. I will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received any representations about the removal of local education authority appointed governors from school governing bodies.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received various representations on this matter. Local education authorities have the statutory power to remove from office governors whom they appoint. They must, however, exercise that power reasonably and we would consider carefully any complaint that they had failed to do so in a particular instance.

Schools (Costs)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table similar to table 12.7 of Cm. 612 recalculated to 1980-81 as the base year, showing the increase in the average unit costs of primary and secondary schools; and if he will provide a breakdown of the increase in real unit costs 1980-81 to 1987-88 shown by that table in a way similar to the 1979-80 to 1987-88 analysis recently provided by his Department to the Education, Science and Arts Committee.

Mr. Butcher: The real-terms increase in the average net institutional expenditure per pupil in maintained primary and secondary schools in England between 1980-81 and 1987-88 is as follows:

Increase in real terms[1] unit costs

	Per cent.
1980-81	100
1981-82	104
1982-83	106
1983-84	109
1984-85	110
1985-86	112
1986-87	121
1987-88	129

[1] Cash prices for 1980-81 have been repriced to 1987-88 prices using the GDP deflator.

The real terms increase of 29 per cent. between 1980-81 and 1987-88 may be analysed as follows:

	Per cent.
Increase due to:	
Volume	
reduced pupil:teacher ratio	11
improved provision for non-teaching costs such as books and equipment and repairs and maintenance	6
Total volume	17
Price	
teachers' pay	11
non-teaching pay and prices	1
Total prices	12
TOTAL	29

Higher Education (Funding)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the outcome of his consultations on shifting the balance of public funding of higher education to fees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The proposals in the consultation paper "Shifting the Balance of Public Funding of Higher Education to Fees" have been widely welcomed. In the light of this positive response, the Government have decided to increase the full-time undergraduate tuition fee met through mandatory awards from its 1989-90 level of £607 to £1,675 in 1990-91. I am writing as follows today to the chairmen of the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council and Universities Funding Council.

"The Government's consultation paper "Shifting the Balance of Public Funding of Higher Education to Fees" was published on 25 April. The Department has received over 150 responses, including that from the Council for which I am grateful.

The overwhelming majority of the responses supported the proposed increase in the publicly funded fee. In the light of this reaction, I have announced today the Government's intention to proceed with the shift. The flat-rate fee for full-time undergraduate students met under the mandatory awards arrangements will be set at £1,675 for the academic year 1990-91. Officials are writing separately to the Council's Chief Executive about the corresponding deduction which will need to be made from the Council's grant and some other technical issues.

A key issue raised by the proposals is the financing of part-time courses and full-time courses not designated under the awards regulations. The Government fully recognises the importance of the continuing availability of these courses in increasing and diversifying higher education opportunities.

As the consultation paper makes clear, the shift of funds from central grant to fees will be in respect of students on designated courses with awards. We intend to maintain the level of funds made available to the Funding Councils for the support of part-time and full-time non-designated courses. I look to the Council in turn to discharge its funding responsibility so as to ensure that support for places on these courses is at least maintained, and I welcome the PCFC's recent decision to provide some enhancement of the resources available for funding part-time places in 1990-91. It is important that the Council's funding methods are such that there need be no increase in fees for these courses in line with the planned increase in the publicly funded full-time fee, though it will remain the case that the level at which fees are set is a matter for individual institutions.

I should like also to respond to the concern that has been expressed in the responses about the position of full-time self-financing students who are on designated courses but are not themselves eligible for a mandatory award, usually by virtue of previous study. For students who are already enrolled (ie who started their courses in the academic year 1989-90 or before) there will, as with those on non-designated courses, be no shift of funds as a result of the switch. Therefore there will be no financial pressure on the system to charge such students more in real terms than they are paying at present. It ought to be possible for the Council and institutions together to translate this policy into detailed practice, so affording the protection envisaged for this group of students in the consultation paper.

For new self-financing students on designated courses, it will continue to be for institutions to set the fee charged. That is something they will do in the light of local circumstances, including the interests of the students concerned. It would be quite contrary to the general thrust of the Government's policies to seek to impose a standard line on institutions.

In view of the widespread interest generated by the consultation paper, I am releasing the text of this letter to the Press."

The deadline for comments on the consultation paper's second proposal to introduce differentiated fees in 1991-92 expires at the end of July. I will inform the House of the Government's conclusions on that consultation in due course.

ENERGY

Electricity Generation

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the volume of coal consumption for the purpose of electricity generation in 1989; and what was the national consumption in 1988.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government do not publish estimates of coal consumption. In the four months January to April 1989, coal consumption by United Kingdom public supply power stations was 29·4 million tonnes. Consumption on the same basis for the whole of 1988 was 82·5 million tonnes.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mortgage Repossessions (Leeds)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Attorney-General how many court actions relating to mortgage repossessions occurred in the Leeds county court in each year since 1982.

The Attorney-General: The number of mortgage actions for possession issued in Leeds county court were:

	Number
1982	803
1983	508
1984	538
1985	800
1986	773
1987	492
1988	807

Sir Terence Conran

Mr. Stanbrook: To ask the Attorney-General if he will seek to institute committal proceedings against Sir Terence Conran, chairman of the Storehouse group of companies, to restrain him from his named intention to break the law by authorising the opening of the group's shops on Sundays in defiance of the terms of the Shops Act 1950.

The Attorney-General: As I have indicated to my hon. Friend in answers given on 17 April 1989 and 3 July 1989, it is the statutory duty of each local authority to enforce the Shops Act 1950 in its area. If a local authority considers, in the exercise of its discretion, that proper enforcement requires that a threatened breach be restrained by injunction, it is open to it to make such an application to the High Court.

Criminal Legal Aid

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration he is giving to alternative remuneration structures for solicitors providing criminal legal aid services.

The Attorney-General: In the light of information obtained last year which linked profitability from criminal legal aid work with the volume dealt with, the Lord Chancellor recognises that the present remuneration structure for criminal legal aid, which is based on national averages and across the board rates, may no longer be entirely appropriate. He has therefore invited the joint data committee of his Department and the Law Society, with assistance from the Legal Aid Board, to consider the coverage of solicitors' firms which handle criminal legal aid cases and the volume of work available to them. He will consider whether alternative remuneration structures are required when the committee has reported.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Attorney-General what steps he is taking to ensure the general availability of criminal legal aid services; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor is committed to ensuring that criminal legal aid services

continue to be generally available. There is no objective evidence at present that there are insufficent solicitors available to undertake criminal legal aid work. The number of solicitors carrying out this work is kept under review. The matter is also presently being considered by the joint data committee of the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Law Society.

Solicitors' Firms

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Attorney-General when he expects to receive the survey of the joint data committee of the coverage of solicitors' firms; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The committee's work is still in a very early stage and it is not yet possible to say when it will report.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cambodia

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government will be attending the Paris peace conference on Cambodia in July; and if he will make it his policy to oppose a solution which permits the return of the Khmer Rouge.

Mr. Eggar: We expect to attend the international conference. A central objective of our policy is to prevent the Khmer Rouge returning to power by force and to help bring about a political settlement which enables the Cambodian people to elect a Government of their own choice.

China

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Chinese authorities on behalf of Liu Huanwen, Liu Qiang, Bai Dongping and Han Dongfang of the Beijing Autonomous Workers Union arrested over the past month; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We and our European partners have repeatedly urged the Chinese authorities to put an end to their repressive actions against those who have done no more than claim their democratic rights. In the declaration on China adopted by the European Council on 27 June the Twelve called for the admission of independent observers to attend trials and to visit prisons. This would cover those members of the Peking Autonomous Workers Union to whom the hon. Member refers.

Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people have applied to the post in Dusseldorf for visas to visit the United Kingdom during 1989 to date; what were the figures for the comparable periods of 1988 and 1987; what were the total numbers of applicants by nationality; what were the total numbers of applications *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused; and what was the average waiting time for interview for each month in each year.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 13 June 1989]:* The consulate-general in Dusseldorf received 5,380 entry clearance applications in the period January to May 1989. Applications in the same period in 1988 and 1987 were 5,300 and 4,858. Details of nationality are not kept. The total number of entry clearances (including visas for dependent territories) issued and refused are:

	Issued	*Refused*
1987	9,892	82
1988	11,890	156
[1]1989	4,265	66

[1] January to May.

The average waiting times, in weeks, for the minority requiring interview for each month in 1987, 1988 and 1989 to date were:

	1987	*1988*	*1989*
January	8·0	8·0	17
February	7·0	9·0	19
March	6·0	8·0	21
April	4·0	7·0	23
May	2·0	5·0	21
June	4·5	4·0	—
July	6·0	4·5	—
August	8·0	7·0	—
September	10·0	9·0	—
October	8·0	12·0	—
November	9·0	16·0	—
December	9·0	17·0	—

The rise in applications recorded in 1988 resulted in a backlog of paperwork related to those applications which attracted either refusal or further inquiries. From the autumn, staff were diverted to deal with it. They have now been redeployed to increase the number of interviews and thus reduce the waiting time.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufacturing Trade (EC)

202. **Mr. Robinson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster with which members of the European Community the United Kingdom enjoyed a surplus in manufacturing trade in 1988.

203. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster with which members of the European Community the United Kingdom enjoyed a surplus in manufacturing trade in 1988.

204. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster with which members of the European Community the United Kingdom enjoyed a surplus in manufacturing trade in 1988.

206. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster with which members of the European Community the United Kingdom enjoyed a surplus in manufacturing trade in 1988.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster with which members of the European Community the United Kingdom enjoyed a surplus in manufacturing trade in 1988.

Mr. Alan Clark: In 1988 the United Kingdom had surpluses in trade in manufactures with Ireland, Spain and Greece.

Consumer Goods

205. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster by how much the volume of consumer goods exported in the first quarter of 1989 grew; and by how much the volume of consumer goods imported changed.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the first quarter of 1989 the volume of exports of consumer goods[1] on a seasonal adjusted overseas trade statistics basis increased by 12 per cent. over the previous quarter. On the same basis imports of consumer goods fell by 1 per cent.

[1]Part of SITC 7 & 8, based on the United Nations broad economic categories.

British Export Goods

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans his Department has to increase promotion of British export goods in *(a)* European Community countries, *(b)* other European countries, *(c)* the United States of America and *(d)* other countries.

Mr. Alan Clark: I announced on 17 January at columns *106-08* the relaunch of my Department's export initiative which introduced new measures to enhance the extensive range of export services traditionally provided by the Department. The initiative provides practical help, advice and support for United Kingdom exporters for all overseas markets. Major promotional campaigns, such as Opportunity Japan have an important role to play in this process.

Export performance overall is encouraging. In the three months ending May 1989, non-oil exports increased in real terms by 7 per cent. over the same period last year.

Fitness Equipment (Safety)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to introduce safety standards to home gym and keep-fit equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Work is to begin next month on the preparation of a harmonised European safety standard for fitness training equipment which will include equipment for home use. The general safety requirement under section 10 of the Consumer Protection Act 1987, which came into force on 1 October 1987, applies to equipment supplied as consumer goods.

Soviet Union (Joint Ventures)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what advice his Department provides for those seeking joint ventures in the Soviet Union with *(a)* state enterprises and *(b)* co-operatives.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department provides advice on the opportunities, the merits and the difficulties in establishing joint ventures in the Soviet Union. Generally, the advice is cautionary because of the Soviet's shortage of hard currency, and particularly so in the case of co-operatives, about which little is known individually. Nevertheless, we are very much in favour of companies doing all they can to find mutually advantageous deals and my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Young visited one successful British joint venture in operation near Kiev last week.

The Soviet Union is mainly interested in establishing manufacturing joint ventures which have an export potential. Companies considering such joint ventures need to decide whether they wish to supply their export markets from a Soviet joint venture manufacturing base. Western companies have instead tended to prefer joint ventures which perform a service, for example, hotel construction and operation, and are therefore able to earn more easily the hard currency which is necessary to provide the western partner with a return on its investment.

Measurement Systems

Mr. Mans: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has for the future development of the national measurement systems.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster have, this afternoon, laid before Parliament a White Paper "Measuring up to the Competition". The White Paper describes the national measurement system and sets out the Government's policy towards this important aspect of the national infrastructure. It describes the role that Government will continue to have in providing the framework for a coherent system of measurement in the country. At the centre of the system are the national measurement standards held, principally, at the national physical laboratory (NPL), a research establishment of the Department of Trade and Industry and a candidate next steps executive agency. The NPL is also the focus for national calibration and accreditation services.

Our plans for the future include extending our collaboration with other European national measurement laboratories in order to ensure an efficient and harmonised system of measurement throughout Europe. We will be seeking to involve business in developing new measurement standards where it has special facilities or expertise to offer. We will also be encouraging business to provide calibration and testing services within the national framework and for it to seek voluntary accreditation through the national measurement accreditation service (Namas), a service of the NPL. A Namas accreditation can help reduce the burden of multiple assessments of a business's competence to undertake tests and calibration. The White Paper also announces a special initiative to be taken by the laboratory of the Government chemist, also a research establishment of the Department and candidate next steps agency, to improve the validity of chemical measurement in the United Kingdom and harmonise it with that in other countries within Europe.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what reduction there has been in the use of chlorofluorocarbons within the differing sectors of the economy since the time of the Government-sponsored international conference on the protection of the ozone layer earlier this year.

Mr. Atkins: This information is not available. The United Kingdom is, however, on course to meet its international commitments on overall CFC reductions well ahead of schedule. Since the conference, there is clear evidence from the CFC-using industries that they are even more aware of the need to respond effectively in achieving

CFC reductions. They and the United Kingdom CFC-producer companies are to be commended for their efforts in developing and adopting alternative substances, processes and products.

SCOTLAND

Community Charge

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's policy regarding the payment of any arrears of poll tax subsequent to a person's death.

Mr. Lang: The collection of the community charge is a matter for Scottish levying authorities. Where there is an amount of community charge due in respect of the period before a person's death, it will, therefore, be for the authority concerned to request payment from the deceased's estate. I am sure that authorities are aware of the need for sensitivity in such cases.

Elderly People (Long-term Care)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the companies with which Greater Glasgow health board is discussing the future provision of long-term care for the elderly.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Geriatric Services

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when Greater Glasgow health board last discussed with *(a)* social work departments and *(b)* the Church of Scotland the future provision of geriatric services.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have asked the chairman of Greater Glasgow health board to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Geriatric Facilities, Rutherglen

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the criteria which must be met before the sale by Greater Glasgow health board of the site proposed for a geriatric hospital in Rutherglen could proceed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is for Greater Glasgow health board to decide whether the site is required for its planned development. if a site is surplus, Government policy requires health boards to dispose of land which is not required as quickly as possible having regard to the state of the market, and good marketing practice.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the representations he has received which support the replacement of proposed National Health Service geriatric facilities in Rutherglen with proposals for commercial provision by Takare plc.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No representations have been received.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he will make for public consultation in Cambuslang and Rutherglen regarding the proposal by Greater Glasgow health board, to contract geriatric services from Takare plc at the site in Rutherglen presently owned by Greater Glasgow health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Home and Health Department issued guidance to health boards in 1975 about consultation when changes are planned in the provision of services.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the benefits which would be achieved by replacing the provision of National Health Service geriatric services in Rutherglen with private commercial based services.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The provision of services is primarily a matter for the health board. I understand that the health board is considering how best to make good the known shortfall in the provision of services for the elderly in Rutherglen. The board is putting the interests of patients first and I welcome that.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultation has taken place with Glasgow district council and Strathclyde regional council with regard to the proposal by the Greater Glasgow health board to sell land in Rutherglen for the provision of private geriatric services.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Officials from both councils have been involved in discussions about the health board's strategy for the care of the elderly. This strategy seeks to identify appropriate and cost effective ways of meeting the needs of the elderly living in the board's area. Glasgow district council, as planning authority, will be consulted on any planning issues arising.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the conditions of use which were part of the agreement when Rutherglen town council sold the site in Rutherglen now owned by Greater Glasgow health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I understand that there are no conditions governing use in the title to the land adjacent to Rutherglen maternity hospital, which was granted to the Western region hospital board by the then royal burgh of Rutherglen in 1972.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to take account of the views of Glasgow district council and Strathclyde regional council with regard to the proposal to sell land in Rutherglen for the provision of private geriatric services.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right and learned Friend has not received any such views.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any company other than Takare plc has been involved in discussions regarding the provision of commercial geriatric services at the site in Rutherglen presently owned by Greater Glasgow health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The provision of services is primarily a matter for the health board. I understand that discussions have taken place with a number of companies.

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, for forestry planting policy, he classifies Acer pseudoplatanus to be an indigenous or an alien species.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Acer pseudoplatanus is regarded as a species that is naturalised though not indigenous.

Undergraduate Tuition Fees

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to increase the level of the home full-time undergraduate tuition fee from 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The proposals in the consultation paper "Shifting the Balance of Public Funding of Higher Education to Fees" have been widely welcomed in Scotland; and I have decided that the tuition fee for full-time undergraduate and most other students whose fees are reimbursed under the students' allowance scheme for Scottish residents will be set at £1,675 for the academic year 1990-91. This increase matches a decision announced today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to increase the fees reimbursed in the scheme of mandatory awards for residents of England and Wales.

In acknowledgment, however, of representations which have been made in response to consultations, I have decided to extend the fee increase to full-time non-degree courses in Scotland leading to qualifications for professions supplementary to medicine and social work for which fees are reimbursed in the students' allowance scheme.

This new level of fee will offer higher education institutions a clear incentive to attract additional students, and will thus further our policy of extending wider access to higher education. For nearly all full-time students, the higher fee will continue to be met through the schemes of student awards, so that as now there will be no cost to the student. For those students who pay their own fees—part-time students or full-time students who are ineligible for awards—we intend to maintain the level of funds available for distribution as grant to the institutions, so that there should be no pressure on the institutions to charge such students more in real terms than they are paying at present. I look to the institutions to ensure that these students are protected from the increased level of fee.

Art Colleges

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of entrants to each Scottish college of art in each of the past 10 years, from *(a)* Scottish schools, *(b)* other United Kingdom schools, *(c)* overseas and *(d)* other avenues.

Mr Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 23 June 1989]:* Information is not readily available.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 7 July 1989

DEFENCE

Submarines

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has received any representations on reported incidents between fishing boats and submarines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Letters have been received from fishermen's organisations and other interested individuals about a number of incidents in which submarines are alleged to have been involved.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence under what circumstances he is prepared to release details of the whereabouts of United Kingdom or allies' submarines on operational duty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It would not be in the national interest, or in the interests of our allies, to disclose such information.

Attack Helicopter

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on his proposals for the development and deployment of an attack helicopter for the armed forces.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Stroud on 7 February 1989 at column *669*.

B52 Aircraft (Exercises)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all exercises involving operations of B52 aircraft from bases in the United Kingdom that have taken place, or are scheduled to take place, during 1989, including exercise names, duration of each exercise, bases used and which units the aircraft are from.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: So far this year, the United States Air Force B52 aircraft have deployed to stations in the United Kingdom as follows:

Date	*Exercise*	*Station*	*Unit*
17-21 April	Busy Warrior	RAF Fairford	42 Bomb Wing, Loring AFB, Maine.
21-30 June	Joint Maritime Course	RAF Mildenhall	42, Bomb Wing, Loring AFB, Maine.

A further deployment to RAF Fairford of B52 aircraft participating in a Busy Warrior exercise is planned to take place from 31 August to 20 September 1989.

NATO Combat Aircraft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list those aircraft types that are currently in operational service with the United States Air Force at bases in the United Kingdom which are not classed as combat aircraft;

(2) if he will list those aircraft types that are currently in operational service with the United States Air Force at bases in the United Kingdom which are classed as combat aircraft;

(3) if he will list those aircraft types that are currently in operational service with the Royal Air Force which are classed as combat aircraft;

(4) what assessment he has made of the effect on the Royal Air Force of the proposed reductions in the number of land-based combat aircraft in the Atlantic-to-Urals zone announced at the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation summit of 29-30 May if dual-capable aircraft were not included;

(5) what assessment he has made of the effect on the Royal Air Force and the Army Air Corps of the proposed reductions in the numbers of helicopters and land-based combat aircraft in the Atlantic-to-Urals zone announced at the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation summit of 29-30 May.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Details of numbers and types of combat aircraft belonging to NATO and Warsaw pact forces will be found on paper 27-28 of NATO's publication "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. NATO is now in the process of refining this information for use in the conventional armed forces in Europe (CFE) negotiations in Vienna. It is too early to say what might be the effect on the United Kingdom's armed forces of any reductions in combat aircraft and helicopters agreed at the CFE talks. The national contributions towards such reductions, in these as in other areas, would be a matter for collective NATO decisions.

F111 Aircraft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the exercise of F111 aircraft of the United States Air Force, normally based at Cannon air force base, New Mexico, at Boscombe Down airfield, Wiltshire, including exercise name, duration, number of aircraft involved and details of similar exercises in 1980, 1983 and 1986.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The exercise referred to is Coronet Diamond. I will write to the hon. Member with the further details that he requests.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his answers regarding deterioration of safety margins and reduced manoeuvrability of F111 aircraft on take off from RAF Upper Heyford apply to the EF-111 aircraft stationed there.

Mr. Neubert: Concern about declining safety margins which led to the change of flight paths at RAF Upper Heyford in June 1988 arose in relation to the F111E aircraft stationed at the base. However, for reasons of safety and air traffic control, all aircraft at the base now use the modified take-off pattern.

HMS Dreadnought

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current locations of the reactor and the reactor compartment from HMS Dreadnought; and how long they have been at their present locations.

Mr. Sainsbury: The de-fuelled reactor of Dreadnought is inside the reactor compartment, which remains an integral part of the submarine. Dreadnought has been berthed at Rosyth naval base since 1983.

IUKADGE

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide his latest estimate for the total cost of the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment when completed.

Mr. Sainsbury: The estimated cost of the complete IUKADGE programme at current prices is £500 million.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the current IUKADGE/ICCS will be able to fully integrate the RAF's link 16 requirement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: All the indications to date suggest that it will be possible to achieve full integration of link 16 into IUKADGE to meet the RAF's requirements.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions his Department had about the possibility of purchasing intellectual property rights associated with the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment; and if he will summarise the details of these discussions including the price asked for those rights by their current holders.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not our practice to reveal details of commercially confidential negotiations.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his current assumption of the date upon which the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment will be fully operational in service.

Mr. Sainsbury: We expect that the IUKADGE will be fully operational in the early 1990s.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the likely annual software maintenance costs in relation to IUKADGE.

Mr. Sainsbury: The latest estimate of the likely annual software maintenance cost of IUKADGE, when the system is fully operational, is £5 million to £6 million. Much of the maintenance of this software will be carried out by the Royal Air Force using in-service resources.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any decision has been made to go ahead with either TRIAD or a deep integration solution in respect of IUKADGE-ICCS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Studies into alternative ways of integrating new data-link systems into IUKADGE are not yet complete. Once the final results have been received they will require extensive evaluation before decisions can be taken.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether *(a)* the Hughes Corporation, *(b)* Plessey, *(c)* Marconi, *(d)* IUKADGE Systems Ltd. or *(e)* any other private interest retains intellectual property rights in connection with IUKADGE; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Information concerning ownership of IPR associated with IUKADGE is commercially confidential.

Arms Sales (Malaysia)

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to the reply of 13 June, *Official Report*, column *400*, what was the date of the first correspondence from Her Majesty's Government dealing with the Malaysian arms sales package that also mentioned overseas aid.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence first wrote to the Malaysian Finance Minister on 28 June 1988 advising him that it would not be acceptable to Her Majesty's Government to link overseas aid to the arms package.

Member's Questions (Cost)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the estimated cost of answering each of the questions from the hon. Member for Coventry South-East, due for answer on 17 May and not given a substantive answer on 3 July, *Official Report*, column *31*; if he will outline the detailed investigations undertaken; what was the cost of answering each of the previous questions from the hon. Member for Coventry South-East of a similar nature to those at column *31*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: This question could be answered only at disproportionate cost.

Port Visits

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to seek arrangements with the Soviet Union for the reciprocal friendly visit of United Kingdom and Soviet nuclear-capable ships to each other's ports, following a similar arrangement between the United States navy and the Soviet navy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government welcome exchange visits by Royal Navy and Soviet warships as part of an increasing programme of United Kingdom-Soviet contacts. The choice of vessel must, however, depend upon a number of factors, in particular ship availability at the time of any projected visit.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Retirement Pensions

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women aged 60 years currently have been excluded from receiving a full retirement pension because their years of work between the ages of 14 and 16 were not taken into account; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not possible to identify whether there are any women who would have received a full basic

retirement pension if they had paid national insurance contributions between 14 and 16 years of age. Prior to 1948, under the National Health Insurance and Contributory Pensions Acts, the earliest date from which an employee could be compulsorily insured for pension purposes was from the date of his/her 16th birthday. Prior to age 16, contributions were payable only for medical cover.

Community Charge (Rebates)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what basis he estimates that 9,000,000 people will be eligible to receive poll tax rebates; what action he intends for a take-up campaign to encourage those who believe they are eligible for rebates to apply; and how the campaign will be funded.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The estimates of the numbers of people expected to receive community charge rebate that were published last summer were based on the benefit rates then current and the then most recent forecasts of community charge levels, and took account of the best demographic and financial information available at the time. Revised estimates will be published in due course when more up-to-date information is available. The Government have already made available publicity on rebates in the form of free leaflets and booklets, and are taking every opportunity to publicise the need to claim. The need for additional publicity is being kept under close review. The normal arrangements for the funding of Government information apply. In addition, it is expected that publicity campaigns will be mounted by local authorities and by certain other bodies.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is taking to inform people that the onus is on the individuals who believe they are eligible for poll tax rebates to apply for rebates; and in what languages this advice will be issued.

Mr. Peter Lloyd Local authorities in England and Wales will be able to treat people who are already receiving housing benefit as having claimed community charge benefit. The Department will write to everyone on income support who has not claimed housing benefit with a community charge benefit claim form. The Government are issuing publicity material, in English, drawing attention to the need to claim community charge benefit. In Wales this publicity material is being issued also in Welsh. The leaflet "Which Benefit?", which refers to community charge rebates in Scotland and to community charge benefit, is now being translated into seven Asian languages,and these will be available soon. The pamphlets and leaflets issued by the Department of the Environment, which include advice on claiming community charge benefit, are also being translated into other languages. Local authorities are also expected to publicise the need to claim community charge benefit, and are well placed to assess the need in their area for publicity material in languages other than English.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to change the rule that attendance allowance is to be disregarded by local authorities when assessing a person's ability to pay home help charges, as stated in DHSS circular 53/71.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

The guidance in circular 53/71 on charging for home help services was issued in relation to the legislation then current governing the powers to local health authorities to make such charges. These powers are now contained in section 17 of the Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudication Act 1983 which permits local social services authorities to make such charges (if any) as they consider reasonable, subject to the right of the client to satisfy the authority that he should not pay more than it is reasonably practicable for him to pay. Guidance on the use of these powers was given in circular LAC(84)7 a copy of which is in the Library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC (Financial Regulation 10449/88)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the additional powers which the proposed financial regulation (10449/88) proposes to give to the European Commission.

Mr. Peter Brooke *[holding answer 19 June 1989]:* The Commission's proposed reform of the financial regulation incorporates revisions which allow the Commission to

(i) decide all transfers of differentiated payment appropriations in the Commission's section of the budget;
(ii) decide transfers between chapters 29 (export refunds in connection with food aid) and 92 (food aid) of part IIIB of the budget;
(iii) implement all of the Community's rights and obligations in ecu;
(iv) prescribe implementing rules to impose penalties, in the form of interest payments, following advances and other payments from the Community Budget which fall to be repaid; and take decisions on the reuse of such advances;
(v) reuse the proceeds of the sale of buildings;
(vi) decide, under implementing rules and after consulting all other institutions, on various monetary amounts connected with contracts (amounts hitherto specified in the financial regulation);
(vii) prescribe implementing rules for the use of electronic management and accounting systems;
(viii) prescribe implementing rules applicable to the accounting officer and assistant accounting officers;
(ix) prescribe implementing rules relating to the award of contracts, the keeping of inventories, the system of accounts and imprest accounting, all in connection with Community staff serving outside the Community.

EC Funds (Misuse)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement explaining the operation of the proposals made by the European Commission to empower offices of the Commission to impose penalties on member states for the misuse of EEC funds; and if Her Majesty's Government will seek to secure a procedure of independent appeal to consider complaints against such decisions taken and such fines imposed by the Commission.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 19 June 1989]:* The Commission already has powers under which it can reclaim from member states certain payments which have been incorrectly made. If my hon. Friend has in mind a particular legislative proposal involving the imposition of penalties by the Commission, I should be happy to provide, or arrange for, a more specific answer.

Exchange Equalisation Account

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the publicly available sources of information on the exchange equalisation account.

Mr. Lilley: The exchange equalisation account holds the United Kingdom's official reserves, figures for which are published in table 17.1 of the Bank of England *Quarterly Bulletin* and in table 10.3 of *Financial Statistics*. Information on reserves changes is also published each month by the Treasury as part of the reserves press notice. Historical material relating to the exchange equalisation account is released in accordance with the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967.

Share Option Scheme

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when an order will be laid bringing into effect his proposal to increase from £100 to £150 the maximum monthly savings limit on an individual employee's contributions under an approved savings-related share option scheme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I propose that the Treasury Order should be laid as soon as possible after Royal Assent to the Finance Bill and should bring into force the new £150 limit from 1 September 1989.

SCOTLAND

Mr. Brian Hosie (Letter)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to reply to the letter from Mr. Brian Hosie, a prisoner in Her Majesty's prison, Shotts, dated 8 March.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A reply was sent to him on 6 July. I regret that Mr. Hosie has had to wait so long for a reply to his representations.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Business Watch

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the introduction of Business Watch crime prevention schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: None. We are pleased that local busines communities are now joining the police and other local agencies to help make business premises and industrial estates less vulnerable to crime. We are quite sure that visible efforts to reduce crime can help bring back confidence and create a climate sympathetic to enterprise.

Prison Officers (House Purchase)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any representations on the length of time it takes to process the applications of prison officers to buy the homes provided with their service.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In the two years since prison officers have been able to buy their homes under the prison service discount scheme, more than 4,000 applications have been received and nearly 3,000 properties have been sold. Although extra staff were provided to deal with these applications, the sheer volume caused some delays, particularly in the conveyancing of the properties, and a number of representations have been received about these.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of inmates in Wandsworth prison on 29 June.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A total of 1,548 prisoners were unlocked at Her Majesty's prison Wandsworth on that day.

Local Management of Schools

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 13 June, *Official Report*, columns *367-8*, to the hon. Member for Woolwich, when he will have finished considering the report of the efficiency scrutiny of the section 11 grant scheme under the Local Government Act 1986; and when he will be publishing the report.

Mr. John Patten: The report of the scrutiny into grants under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 was published on 3 July. Copies of the report were placed in the Library.

The report contains a number of recommendations to improve the effectiveness of section 11 grant. We are considering further those recommendations with a view to improving the important service that the grant provides in enabling Britain's ethnic minorities to overcome barriers to their full involvement in the mainstream of national life.

Passport Office (Wales)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to establish a passport office to serve all the needs of the whole of Wales.

Mr. Renton: There are no present plans to do so. As I indicated on 14 June in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) at column *462*, we shall be reviewing the location and number of the regional passport offices later this year.

Mrs. Sakina Jan

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will take a decision on the application made by Mrs. Sakina Jan, passport No. C813895, visa No. A/G106164, Heathrow reference JE/289/632 on 25 September 1987 to be allowed to remain in the United Kingdom; and why applications for permanent stay made by her representative dated 25 September 1987, 20 December 1988 and 19 May 1989 have, to date, not been answered.

Mr. Renton: I regret that owing to administrative errors, the correspondence relating to Mrs. Sakina Jan's application was misfiled and action was not taken. The correspondence has now been traced and the immigration department is writing to Mrs. Jan's solicitors. The case will be given priority and dealt with as quickly as possible.

Chinese Students

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the policy of his Department towards allowing the wives and children of the Chinese students now studying in the United Kingdom to be granted a visa to join them during their studies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Under the immigration rules the wife and children under 18 of a student should be given leave to enter for the period of his authorised stay if they can be maintained and accommodated without recourse to public funds. Applications should be made overseas for prior entry clearance, and each case will be looked at in the light of its particular circumstances.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to grant to Chinese students who obtain extension of stay in the United Kingdom temporary work permits to enable them to support themselves and any dependants.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 26 June to the question from the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) at column *324*.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Vandalism

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the cost of his present publicity campaign in the schools against vandalism.

Mr. Butcher: In March 1989, the Department launched the video "Schoolwatch". Total costs to the Department, up to the end of June 1989, to make, distribute and market the video were £75,600. Municipal Mutual Insurance contributed a further £40,000 to this joint venture.

There is an additional ongoing cost to the Department in meeting the cost of CFL Vision making the video available to borrowers on a free loan basis. To the end of June 1989 the cost of financing free borrowings of the video was £6,300.

On 6 July 1989, Building Bulletin 69 "Crime prevention in schools: specification, installation and maintenance of intruder alarm systems" was published by HMSO. The cost to the Department of buying in copies to distribute to local education authorities is £2,100.

National Curriculum

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions his Department had with the teachers' unions on how information as to attainment targets within the national curriculum are to be made available to teachers responsible for the implementation of the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department has distributed free copies of the statutory orders for mathematics, science and English in sufficient numbers to allow one for each teacher in primary and special schools, and for each subject specialist in secondary schools. LEAs were invited to estimate the numbers they required on this basis. An advance instalment was sent direct to each school; the remaining copies were delivered to LEAs for them to arrange distribution to schools. There was no need to discuss these arrangements with the teachers' unions; they were publicised well in advance.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information regarding the national curriculum is to be made available on computer disk; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The attainment targets and programmes of study for mathematics and science are already on the national educational resources information service computer system (NERIS), which is available direct to schools or as part of other systems. The attainment targets and programmes of study for English key stage 1 are being put on NERIS now. Additionally, the data is available on a compact disk (a CD-ROM) and NERIS is looking at the possibility of making the data available in other computer disk formats. It is also possible for schools to transfer the material, a key stage at a time, on to their own floppy disks.

Teaching Jobs (Screening)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements have been made to scrutinise overseas applicants for teaching jobs in Britain; and what measures are being taken to ensure that such applicants have not been found guilty of child abuse in their own country.

Mr. Butcher: Applications for qualified teacher status in England and Wales from teachers trained overseas are at present considered by the Department under paragraph *2(b)* of schedule 5 to the Education (Teachers) Regulations 1982. Status is accorded in those cases where the course of initial teacher training undertaken was comparable to an approved course of initial teacher training for school teachers available in England and Wales at the same time. Beyond that the question of a person's suitability for appointment is a matter for the local education authority and/or the governing body of the school or establishment concerned, and there are no separate arrangements for scrutinising the background of overseas applicants.

The employment of teachers in Scotland and in Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland respectively.

Nursery Education (Birkenhead)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when his Department will give approval to the application for the provision of nursery education at St. Paul's Roman Catholic primary school, Greenfields, Birkenhead.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend approved the proposal on 30 June 1989.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Immigration Appeals (Scotland)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Attorney-General how many immigration appeals are currently waiting to be heard in Scotland.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 4 July at column *113*.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Attorney-General what measures he is taking to ensure that current delays in respect of immigration appeal hearings in Scotland are minimised.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 4 July at column *113*.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Doorkeepers (Summer Uniform)

Mr. Cox: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what plans there are to provide a summer uniform for the House's Doorkeepers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Beith: This is a matter for the Serjeant at Arms and I have asked him to consider this proposal.

"Look After Your Heart" Campaign

Dr. David Clark: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, whether the Commission has considered the document, "Working for a Healthier Future—an Employers' Guide to the Look After Your Heart Campaign", a copy of which has been sent to him; and what action is being taken to implement its recommendations in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Beith: The Commission has not yet had an opportunity to consider the document, but it has an obvious continuing interest in maintaining healthy standards in the House for Members and all staff. In that respect it has approved several projects such as a medical surveillance scheme for Members; the appointment of a nursing sister; the retention on a part-time basis of a medical consultant; the retention of a nutritional adviser by the Refreshment Department; the introduction of a triennial screening programme for breast and cervical cancer; the establishment of a gymnasium; and an examination by the Services Committee of the feasibility of including recreational facilities in the planning of the new parliamentary buildings. The Commission will seek the advice of the House authorities on the extent to which the campaign's aims may be applicable to the House.

WALES

Eye Tests

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many eye tests have taken place in Wales *(a)* in total and *(b)* for pensioners in each of the years 1986, 1987, 1988 and to the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The numbers of National Health Service sight tests paid for by family practitioner committees in Wales are given in the table. Information on tests paid for privately and on sight tests for pensioners is not available centrally.

Period	*Number of tests*
1986	623,088
1987	651,175
[1]1988	522,963

[1] (First three quarters only).

Grant Aid

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those voluntary bodies, organisations and projects assisted by his Department with grant aid in the financial year 1987-88, together with the amount and the statutory provision under which the grant was allocated.

Mr. Grist: I regret that full details of all voluntary bodies, organisations and projects receiving grant aid could be extracted from records of major schemes only at disporportionate cost, but the table shows the total grant paid to the voluntary sector under each scheme and relevant statute.

Scheme	*Statute*	*Objectives*	*Total grant £*
Mental Handicap Strategy	NHS Act 1977 s23	Promote/develop support services for independent living	240,803
Regional Service Development	NHS Act 1977 s23	Encourage organ donation	18,234
Miscellaneous Central Supplies	NHS Act 1977 s23	Mountain Rescue voluntary organisations equipment	4,041
Joint Finance/Care in the Community	NHS Act 1977 s28A	Collaboration between Health and Local Authorities and voluntary organisations	197,870
Elderly Initiative	NHS Act 1977 ss28A & 28B & Health Services & Public Health Act 1968 s64	Demonstation projects to develop care of the elderly	5,682
Regional Service Development	Health Services & Public Health Act 1968 s64	Disabled driver assessment	3,008
Drug & Alcohol Misuse	Health Services & Public Health Act 1968 s64	Initiatives for prevention education and training	103,801

Scheme	Statute	Objectives	Total grant £
Health Promotion	Health Services & Public Health Act 1968 s64	Improve public awareness	57,827
General Schemes of Grant Aid	Health Services & Public Health Act 1968 s64	Support of Age Concern projects	59,398
Mental Illness General Schemes of Grant Aid	Health Services & Public Health Act 1968 s64	Promotion of mental health	59,550
General Schemes of Grant Aid	Health Services & Public Health Act 1968 s64	Family Planning Association aid	8,000
Wales Under Fives Initiative	Health Services & Public Health Act 1968 s64	Support of child care voluntary organisations	100,108
General Schemes of Grant Aid	Health Services & Public Health Act 1968 s64	Support of child care voluntary organisations	291,468
Intermediate Treatment (Young People in Trouble)	Health Services & Public Health Act 1968 s64	Development of Intermediate Treatment programmes	185,030
AIDS	Health Services & Public Health Act 1968 s64	Improve Public awareness	4,800
Opportunities for Volunteering	Health Services & Public Health Act 1968 s64	Promote voluntary activity in health social services	191,500
General Schemes of Grant Aid	Health Services & Public Health Act 1968 s64 and Development of Rural Wales Act 1976 s26	Stimulate voluntary sector activity in health and personal social services fields	954,720
Agriculture and Environment Projects	Development of Rural Wales Act 1976 s26	Farming, Forestry & Wildlife Trust	1,500
UK 2000	Development of Rural Wales Act 1976 s26	(a) Environmental (b) Training/Work Experience	200,034
Special Grants Environmental Programme	Development of Rural Wales Act 1976 s26	Promote conservation & environmental improvement	86,204
Gypsy Sites	Development of Rural Wales Act 1976 s26	Advice/liaison on gypsy matters	1,180
Urban Programme	Local Government Grants (Social Need) Act 1969	Alleviate social need	3,430,000
Assistance to Welsh Language	Development of Rural Wales Act 1976 s26	Assist voluntary organisations promoting Welsh	1,153,383
Welsh Language Education	Education Act 1980 s21	Extension or improvement in Welsh language education	18,800
Voluntary Youth Services, Village Halls & Community Centres Programme	SI 1983/74	Facilities for young people 14-20 and local communities	341,000
HQ Grants to National Voluntary Youth Organisations	SI 1983/74	Services for young people 14-20	274,946
Capital Grants to Voluntary Youth Organisations	SI 1983/74	Improve facilities	19,770
Development Grants	SI 1983/74	Innovation projects	39,218
Research & Education Services	SI 1983/74	Projects to guide policy or improve quality	3,000
Museum Grants	Treasury Minute of 1966	Promote and develop local museum services	27,894
Housing Grants	Housing Act 1985 s73	Assist relief of homelessness by voluntary organisations	159,350
Housing Management Education and Training Grants	Housing and Planning Act 1986 s16	Improve management within all housing bodies	78,543
Road Safety	Road Traffic Act 1972 s39	Promotion of Road Safety	80,000

Scheme	Statute	Objectives	Total grant £
Rural Transport Innovation Grant	Transport Act 1985 s108	Encourage provision of new/improve transport schemes	7,000
Civic Societies Grant Scheme	Ancient Monuments & Archeological Areas Act 1979 s45	Carry out and publish results of archeological excavations	516,000
Civic Societies Grant Scheme	Town & Country Planning Act 1971 s253	Preserve/improve environment	1,648
Development Board for Rural Wales	Development of Rural Wales Act 1976 s4	Social development	220,000
Welsh Development Agency Grants	Welsh Development Agency Act 1975	Environmental improvement	195,230
Sports Council for Wales Grants	Appropriations Acts	(a) Provision of recreational facilities (b) Raising standards (c) Increasing participation	594,786 580,407 16,894
Children's Play	Appropriations Acts	Promote children's play facilities	36,750

PRIME MINISTER

Madrid Conference

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Prime Minister if she will publish the document "Social Progress: the United Kingdom's Record", which was circulated at the Madrid conference.

The Prime Minister: Copies of the document were made available to members of the press at the time of the conference and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Prime Minister what was the cost to public funds of producing the document, "Social Progress: the United Kingdom's Record", which was circulated at the Madrid conference.

The Prime Minister: So far, 1,000 copies of the document have been printed at a cost of £1,430.

EC Directives

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the 148 European Community directives which have not been implemented by Her Majesty's Government.

The Prime Minister: The Commission has been asked to provide a list. When this is available it will be placed in the Library.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

China

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has been making to the Government of China on the subject of human rights.

Mr. Eggar: We have made a number of representations about human rights in China in recent years. As regards the most recent events, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs said in his statement to the House on 6 June that he had summoned the Chinese chargé d'affaires on 5 June to make it clear to him that the British Government and people deeply deplored the action of the Chinese authorities in suppressing the democratic aspirations of the Chinese people. Representations have also been made on behalf of all EC members.

Hong Kong

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the admission of Hong Kong British passport holders to Britain.

Mr. Eggar: We have received many such representations, both here and in Hong Kong, including during the recent visit by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Mr. Jonas Savimbi

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet or exchange views with Mr. Jonas Savimbi of UNITA.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans to meet Mr. Savimbi at present.

Tibet

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received calling for Her Majesty's Government to protest to the Government of China about the repression of Tibetan nationals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Among the many representations we have received about China since the recent appalling events there, some have focused on the situation in Tibet.

West Bank and Gaza Strip (Schools)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to seek to ensure that schools, including United Nations Relief and Works Agency schools in the West Bank and Gaza strip, are reopened and educational activity allowed to resume unhindered.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have repeatedly made clear our view that Israel's security concerns do not justify the closure of schools. We have called on the Israeli authorities, most recently in the European Council declaration on the middle east on 27 June, to allow the schools to reopen.

Palestinian and Israeli Students

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the financial assistance available to *(a)* Palestinian and *(b)* Israeli students who wish to study in the United Kingdom; and what numbers of students are involved.

Mr. Eggar: Both Israeli students and Palestinian students from the occupied territories are eligible for financial support to study in the United Kingdom under the following award schemes which we fund:

(i) the FCO scholarships and awards scheme (FCOSAS);
(ii) the overseas research students awards scheme (ORSAS) funded by the Department of Education and Science; and
(iii) the British Council's fellowships programme.

In addition, Palestinian students are also supported under the ODA's technical co-operation and training programme (TCTP).

In 1988-89 a total of 63 Israelis and 94 Palestinians from the occupied territories were studying in the United Kingdom and sponsored by us.

EC (Spanish Presidency)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Spanish presidency of the European Community.

Mrs. Chalker: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in her statement on 29 June on the European Council, we congratulate the Spanish Government on their presidency, during which a record 68 single market measures were agreed.

Esquipulas II

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what ways Her Majesty's Government are encouraging the countries of central America to resolve their problems within the framework of the Esquipulas II peace process.

Mr. Eggar: We have consistently supported efforts to promote a peaceful negotiated settlement to the various conflicts in central America, and in all our bilateral and multilateral contacts with the Governments involved we urge the need for full implementation of the Esquipulas II and subsequent agreements. We also take an active part in the efforts of the Twelve to encourage dialogue and regional integration.

Isreal (Nuclear Technology)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements exist between Her Majesty's Government and Israel for the exchange of nuclear technology.

Mr. Waldegrave: None.

Gibraltar

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received on the future of Gibraltar; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has received no recent representations about the future of Gibraltar. Our consideration of Gibraltar's future is governed by the commitment, renewed by successive Governments, that we would never enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another state against their freely and democratically expressed wishes.

Spain

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to meet the Spanish Foreign Secretary.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs regularly meets the Spanish Foreign Minister at a variety of European Community, NATO and other multilateral meetings. In addition, the two Foreign Ministers meet bilaterally from time to time and hold an annual meeting to discuss Gibraltar-related issues, as part of the Brussels process. The next such meeting is due to take place in Madrid before the end of this year.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Disaster Management Training

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is able to give details of *(a)* disaster management training programmes for staff within the Overseas Development Administration and *(b)* the numbers of staff now qualified in these areas.

Mr. Eggar: With the exception of a new staff member, the other three staff in the Overseas Development Administration's disaster unit are widely experienced in disaster response administration. We have recently increased practical and on-the-job training including short, working attachments to the office of the United Nations disaster relief co-ordinator in Geneva and to the United States office of emergency disaster assistance in Washington. The scope for external training is under review.

Plantations

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of plantation developments funded by the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Eggar: The information is not readily available. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will write to the hon. Member shortly.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Shipbuilding and Ship Repair (Redundancies)

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of redundancies in the shipbuilding and ship repair industries in Northern Ireland since 1 January 1984.

Mr. Viggers: The total number of redundancies during this period at Harland and Wolff was some 2,600.

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment and Suicide

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, whether any recent surveys have been undertaken or funded by the Government on the relationship between the unemployment rate and the suicide rate.

Mr. Lee: None has been undertaken by or for my Department.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any evidence of a causal link between unemployment and suicide.

Mr. Lee: No.

Employment Training

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his reply of 22 June, *Official Report*, column 232, concerning trainees who have left the employment training programme, what information is available about the qualifications they obtained on their courses.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 4 July 1989]:* Information is collected by Training Agency area offices from training managers about qualifications being studied for, and those achieved. The information is presently being used for the monitoring of individual schemes, and is not aggregated to area office or national level. Comprehensive information (including results received after the trainee has left the programme) will be available in due course at national and local level from a follow-up survey of trainees.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many agreed action plans have been drawn up at ET training agents on a monthly basis *(a)* nationally and *(b)* by training agency area, since September 1988.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* The information requested is given in the table:

Action plans completed by ET training agents: September 1988 to May 1989

	Agreed action plans								
	September 1988	*October 1988*	*November 1988*	*December 1988*	*January 1989*	*February 1989*	*March 1989*	*April 1989*	*May 1989*
GREAT BRITAIN	30,836	41,824	47,531	39,186	47,511	51,846	53,338	43,831	38,943
South East Region									
Berkshire and Oxfordshire	242	798	0	922	514	450	418	394	289
Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire	219	294	763	411	429	520	500	523	431
Essex	227	550	525	1,051	632	748	989	811	555
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	411	487	679	409	717	670	772	690	538
Kent	32	610	1,159	488	714	652	596	509	484
Surrey	102	223	174	615	190	0	196	188	169
Sussex	0	682	900	470	555	652	695	603	525
London Region									
Inner London North	505	1,196	1,545	1,606	1,651	1,799	2,090	1,626	1,595
Inner London South	510	655	616	539	645	718	736	498	420
London East	793	735	805	670	972	1,117	1,092	734	743
London North	732	857	935	846	858	970	996	820	726
London South	280	320	479	340	423	542	543	417	406
London West	591	867	811	676	900	912	952	383	365
South West Region									
Avon	238	361	411	327	453	506	489	550	432
Devon & Cornwall	665	692	1,244	795	1,294	615	1,192	930	861
Dorset and Somerset	418	478	386	332	342	516	471	367	307
Gloucester & Wiltshire	357	546	560	433	390	479	536	480	442
West Midlands Region									
Birmingham & Solihull	935	1,026	1,201	756	1,553	1,685	1,382	1,471	1,177
Coventry & Warwickshire	378	617	576	322	638	812	748	661	524
Dudley & Sandwell	818	769	899	1,021	978	1,059	1,416	729	631
Staffordshire	541	906	434	1,145	1,128	929	1,192	764	594
The Marches, Hereford/Worcester	0	710	677	954	406	613	1,330	740	577
Wolverhampton & Walsall	0	1,055	1,913	308	706	821	754	552	463
East Midlands & Eastern Region									
Bedfordshire & Cambridgeshire	502	484	520	331	400	426	362	403	317
Derbyshire	704	742	743	501	582	677	743	679	531
Leicestershire & Northamptonshire	499	607	604	551	718	719	736	711	598
Lincolnshire	192	251	267	154	296	359	313	303	240
Norfolk & Suffolk	586	625	652	426	753	641	961	549	530
Nottinghamshire	602	909	853	669	937	923	851	955	786

	Agreed action plans								
	September 1988	*October 1988*	*November 1988*	*December 1988*	*January 1989*	*February 1989*	*March 1989*	*April 1989*	*May 1989*
Yorkshire & Humberside Region									
Bradford, Calderdale & Kirklees	758	944	1,439	911	1,123	1,186	1,316	1,064	914
Humberside	858	821	791	847	949	970	938	874	727
North Yorkshire & Leeds	621	826	752	743	777	1,035	1,002	1,181	1,245
Sheffield & Rotherham	1,078	1,387	1,382	961	1,459	1,236	1,043	944	994
Wakefield, Doncaster & Barnsley	861	1,154	1,296	990	1,501	1,547	1,265	1,084	1,144
North West Region									
Cheshire	809	826	901	588	773	951	699	605	574
Cumbria	267	280	406	269	315	377	373	264	182
Lancashire	937	1,050	955	943	1,090	1,164	1,279	1,151	899
Central Manchester	597	685	945	936	954	984	837	832	639
Greater Manchester North	395	699	711	423	821	834	894	810	685
Greater Manchester East	484	904	784	468	604	875	913	713	644
Merseyside	630	1,386	1,715	1,504	1,995	2,315	2,220	2,060	1,671
Northern Region									
Cleveland	1,404	1,229	1,141	799	1,624	1,764	1,503	1,261	1,222
County Durham	1,027	894	077	626	1,014	1,254	1,060	1,022	917
Northumberland, North Tyneside & Newcastle	602	962	1,104	849	1,086	1,258	1,275	962	1,006
Sunderland, South Tyneside & Gateshead	1,356	1,266	1,325	1,323	1,349	1,536	1,488	1,371	1,182
Wales									
Dyfed & West Glamorgan	524	759	922	749	909	930	949	879	855
Gwent	268	348	536	282	747	774	681	331	516
Gwynned, Clwyd & Powys	309	458	545	546	573	679	497	514	486
Mid & South Glamorgan	826	935	1,073	856	951	1,302	1,301	899	893
Scotland									
Ayrshire, Dumfries & Galloway	550	706	895	832	802	1,003	826	645	675
Central & Fife	429	459	710	603	594	832	573	529	567
Glasgow City	828	958	1,263	1,160	1,178	1,163	1,915	1,430	1,186
Grampian & Tayside	937	817	825	726	918	1,018	1,267	784	748
Highlands & Islands	158	207	301	351	397	400	308	220	190
Lanarkshire	301	649	710	480	639	800	883	688	567
Lothian & Borders	604	766	1,269	757	805	824	940	594	645
Renfrew, Dumbarton & Argyll	339	397	607	576	770	1,000	1,122	858	714

Note: Some months show no agreed action plans because of computer difficulties. Action plans agreed in these months are recorded in subsequent months.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many starts have been undertaken at ET training managers on a monthly basis *(a)* nationally and *(b)* by training agency area, since September 1988.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* The information requested is given in the table:

Starts with ET training managers: September 1988 to May 1989

	Sept. 1988	*Oct. 1988*	*Nov. 1988*	*Dec. 1988*	*Jan. 1989*	*Feb. 1989*	*March 1989*	*April 1989*	*May 1989*
Great Britain	21,462	31,083	35,213	28,867	36,698	43,946	42,157	36,313	29,953
South East Region									
Berkshire and Oxfordshire	106	207	156	182	320	360	277	304	155
Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire	230	308	243	224	300	323	332	384	170
Essex	155	246	326	286	355	432	372	377	280
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	444	488	457	423	444	427	388	470	360
Kent	259	429	475	336	503	498	365	322	273
Surrey	121	131	106	68	125	88	71	113	73
Sussex	218	241	224	188	259	343	316	370	260
London Region									
Inner London North	820	1,159	948	712	1,314	1,090	1,115	927	770
Inner London South	404	491	540	454	639	572	756	675	456
London East	268	382	432	329	488	453	487	381	339
London North	730	565	602	533	655	664	848	566	583
London South	116	202	216	179	404	390	295	360	216
London West	165	258	372	198	302	263	283	177	187
South West Region									
Avon	156	329	385	339	437	480	506	502	394
Devon and Cornwall	494	783	1,003	833	1,178	1,269	1,139	842	714
Dorset and Somerset	193	355	326	363	259	372	375	343	265

	Sept. 1988	Oct. 1988	Nov. 1988	Dec. 1988	Jan. 1989	Feb. 1989	March 1989	April 1989	May 1989
Gloucester and Wiltshire	232	257	309	207	274	357	329	284	333
West Midlands Region									
Birmingham and Solihull	465	1,190	1,237	1,051	1,377	1,739	1,576	1,437	1,016
Coventry and Warwickshire	334	378	448	320	423	549	574	559	405
Dudley and Sandwell	480	521	444	436	705	627	537	521	531
Staffordshire	383	589	640	552	681	758	851	603	444
The Marches, Hereford and Worcester	318	419	448	489	558	630	616	460	431
Wolverhampton and Walsall	490	636	612	455	576	741	769	537	441
East Midlands and Eastern Region									
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	212	373	376	286	382	330	284	295	223
Derbyshire	358	594	620	386	540	680	597	574	423
Leicestershire and Northamptonshire	274	472	465	358	534	653	634	572	385
Lincolnshire	168	186	196	205	232	266	244	218	212
Norfolk and Suffolk	403	460	544	466	500	797	647	617	544
Nottinghamshire	356	643	659	501	762	837	821	786	648
Yorkshire and Humberside Region									
Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees	454	706	1,135	873	877	1,067	1,038	911	780
Humberside	975	1,127	949	828	1,060	1,112	1,059	906	781
North Yorkshire and Leeds	353	715	992	755	1,059	1,033	866	941	852
Sheffield and Rotherham	679	1,187	1,310	1,079	1,268	1,489	1,339	1,137	823
Wakefield, Doncaster and Barnsley	513	788	1,123	867	1,188	1,405	1,073	955	876
North West Region									
Cheshire	463	897	697	451	605	749	657	532	479
Cumbria	117	162	283	208	290	395	301	266	208
Lancashire	599	891	882	797	960	1,224	1,093	909	676
Central Manchester	545	738	899	608	828	1,051	866	923	770
Greater Manchester North	323	541	646	523	602	759	717	616	521
Greater Manchester East	363	596	660	426	477	643	800	664	548
Merseyside	619	1,137	1,477	1,132	1,694	2,234	2,034	1,859	1,640
Northern Region									
Cleveland	718	904	1,138	802	1,074	1,555	1,400	1,072	859
County Durham	618	857	804	596	797	1,145	1,067	810	740
Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle	353	455	707	613	789	868	814	880	707
Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead	706	1,003	997	884	977	1,204	1,384	1,058	924
Wales									
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	479	586	945	698	819	915	968	918	743
Gwent	193	268	329	267	458	634	440	522	352
Gwynned, Clwyd and Powys	277	430	491	520	606	729	664	593	438
Mid and South Glamorgan	432	683	885	687	1,017	1,369	1,157	910	747
Scotland									
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	306	303	373	442	461	597	573	565	439
Central and Fife	344	337	497	478	514	710	686	402	368
Glasgow City	476	574	704	740	733	1,086	1,308	969	802
Grampian and Tayside	398	382	617	380	453	668	742	481	492
Highlands and Islands	46	72	84	86	121	200	208	190	191
Lanarkshire	214	483	576	537	452	677	860	653	480
Lothian and Borders	394	683	787	679	601	782	924	553	723
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	153	286	417	552	392	658	715	542	463

Child Care Facilities

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he is taking to encourage the provision of child care facilities in the workplace; and what information he has on how many firms and Government offices currently provide such facilities.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 5 July 1989]:* My right hon. Friend takes every opportunity to encourage employers to help employees combine work and family responsibilities. Workplace nurseries are one possible way of helping parents with child care although it will not necessarily be the most appropriate in all cases. Other possibilities include help with child care costs in the local home area and rearrangement of working hours and holidays to fit in with school hours and terms.

My right hon. Friend does not have comprehensive information on the extent of employer assisted child care outside Government Departments but the indications are that such provision is growing. In the Civil Service 15 Departments provide holiday play schemes for the children of their staff. Two new inter-departmental schemes began in Westminster during the spring 1989 half-term. In addition, two schemes were launched by the DHSS during the Easter holidays—one at the Elephant and Castle and one, with the Department of Employment,

in Coventry. The Departments of Employment and Social Security have set up "care-parents" schemes and the Ministry of Defence and the Home Office are both developing nursery schemes for the under-fives.

I also take a full part in the ministerial group on women's issues which is currently considering the whole question of childcare provision and which recently issued a five-point plan designed to pave the way for the provision of child care to suit family needs.

TRANSPORT

Euro-Control

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was achieved during Britain's presidency of Euro-Control.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* Under the United Kingdom's presidency in 1988, Euro-Control gained widespread backing as the key organisation for improving practical co-ordination and co-operation between Europe's national air traffic control authorities. A number of successful initiatives were pursued, including agreement on the urgent preparation of a plan to establish a centralised flow management system, the creation of a team to spearhead the removal of incompatibilities between national air traffic control systems in the short term, the approval of the first edition of the common medium-term plan for harmonising national systems, and the development of the PHARE programme for integrating research and development of future systems.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Single Market

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the examples given in the recently issued, "1992 for You: An Action Guide for Smaller Firms", are based on actual businesses.

Mr. Maude: Yes, but some details have been changed to avoid identification of individual firms.

ENVIRONMENT

Air Pressure Gauges

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government have any plans to introduce statutory controls governing operation and testing of air pressure gauges on garage forecourts in order to ensure that they meet the approved British standard.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.

British Standard 4613 (specification for tyre pressure gauges) which has been approved for the purposes of Section 10(3) of the Consumer Protection Act 1987 is applicable to portable gauges supplied as consumer products.

I have no plans to introduce statutory controls for air pressure gauges on garage forecourts.

Dichlorvos

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has any plans to prepare an environmental quality standard for dichlorvos; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the reasons a product licence was granted for Nuvan 500 EC; if it is his intention to remove Nuvan 500 EC from the red list; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what steps he is taking to reduce the input of dichlorvos to the aquatic environment; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Dichlorvos, the active ingredient of Nuvan 500EC, was included on the initial red list of priority substances whose input into water should be minimised. The list of substances and actions to achieve this were announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) on 10 April at column *405*. There are no plans for removing any substances from that list.

The water research centre is currently reviewing the data on the ecotoxicity and behaviour in the aquatic environment of a number of red list substances, including dichlorvos, with a view to recommending environmental quality standards.

The granting of product licences for veterinary medicines is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Pollution (Prosecutions)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many prosecutions have occurred under section 3 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 each year since its inception; how many have been successful; on how many occasions the maximum fines have been applied; and if he will consider increasing the maximum limits of fines prescribed under the Act.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of prosecutions and convictions for offences under section 3 in each year since June 1976 are as follows:

Year	*Number of offences proceeded against*	*Number of successful prosecutions*
1976	—	—
1977	15	13
1978	31	30
1979	14	13
1980	29	24
1981	50	35
1982	58	48
1983	104	66
1984	85	67
1985	93	65
1986	130	93
1987	111	77

Figures for 1988 are not yet available and information about maximum fines imposed can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Penalties under section 3 are governed by the standard scale of fines kept under review by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department. There is no limit to the fines which may currently be imposed under section 3 on conviction on indictment.

Worsthorne Sewage Works

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will call for a report from the North West water authority on the ongoing pollution to Rowley lake and the River Brun originating from Worsthorne sewage treatment works.

Mr. Howard: I understand that the North West authority is considering various options for remedying the situation including the possible closure of the works or the diversion of the effluent from both the works and a nearby storm overflow to a point below Rowley lake.

Planning Appeals (Camden)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of planning appeals in the London borough of Camden he has approved in each of the last five years.

Mr. Howard: Set out below are details of planning appeals recovered for the Secretary of State's decision in the London borough of Camden over the past five years.

Year	*Appeals dismissed*	*Appeals allowed*	*Percentage allowed by Secretary of State*
1 July 1984 to 30 June 1985	1	9	90
1 July 1985 to 30 June 1986	6	6	50
1 July 1986 to 30 June 1987	6	4	40
1 July 1987 to 30 June 1988	2	6	75
1 July 1988 to 30 June 1989	3	7	70

River Pollution

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications for consent to discharge unsatisfactory effluent into rivers have been received from water authorities in England and Wales so far for the current year.

Mr. Howard: Lists of sewage treatment works for which applications have been made by water authorities for time-limited discharge consents have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. Details of the applications—which currently number some 852—may be obtained from the public register maintained by each water authority. The applications have also been advertised by the authorities concerned. None has yet been granted.

Conservation, Access and Recreation

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the code of practice on conservation, access and recreation under clause 10 of the Water Bill.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food issued the code of practice on conservation, access and recreation under section 10 of the Water Act 1989 on 6 July.

The code provides guidance for the new water and sewerage undertakers and for the National Rivers Authority on conservation, access and recreation matters generally, including:

- protection of landscape and minimisation of damage from water industry operations;
- conservation of flora, fauna and natural habitats;
- protection of ancient monuments and of water industry buildings of historical or architectural importance;
- maintenance and development of policies for opening up areas of high amenity value to rambling and quiet countryside pursuits;
- maintenance of existing recreational uses of water industry land and water; and
- ensuring that policies for new recreational uses are fair and equitable and provide for as wide a range of interest groups as practicable.

The code follows wide consultation on the draft published in January, which was widely welcomed by conservation bodies and takes account of debate in both Houses during the passage of the Bill. In particular it extends the guidance on recreational provision, and on the protection of historic buildings, ancient monuments and archaeological sites; and offers new guidance on the preservation of public freedom of access.

Taken with the duties under sections 8 and 9 of the Act, it will, I believe, ensure that the new bodies created by the Act will maintain and further extend the achievements of the water authorities in conservation, public access and recreation.

Housing Subsidy

Sir George Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department will now review the operation of the system of admissible cost limits for housing subsidy, following the first 12 months' experience, as promised in DOE circular 5/88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: My Department is today issuing a consultation paper on the review of the operation of the admissible cost limit system for housing subsidy to the local authority associations and will be holding discussions with their representatives. The review will consider how well the system has worked since it replaced individual project control in April 1988.

The Department will also propose to the associations that the system should be extended to cover the costs of existing houses and flats acquired by councils, either by leasehold or purchase. This would not introduce any new constraints on the capacity of authorities to lease or buy dwellings, but it would limit the Exchequer's liability to subsidise costs in the same way as already applies with costs of new building by authorities. The views of local authority associations are sought within two months and we will then consider their responses. If the proposal is confirmed, however, its effect will be backdated to apply to acquisitions agreed on or after 17 August.

HEALTH

Chiropodists

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many chiropodists are state registered; and how many others are known to practise without registration.

Mr. Mellor: The Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine (an independent statutory

body) maintains the state register and would be able to advise the hon. Gentleman. State registration is a requirement for all chiropodists in NHS employment; information on others is not held centrally.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the practice of chiropody by non state registered chiropodists.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the Minister for Health's reply to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 28 April 1987 at cols. *113-4*. The position remains unchanged.

Organ Transplants

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will establish a national register of potential donors of organs for transplant.

Mr. Freeman: At present we have no plans to establish a national register of potential organ donors. A working party chaired by Sir Raymond Hoffenberg examined such registers, and considered that they were unlikely to have a major impact on organ donation. Before giving further consideration to a national register, we would wish to see evidence that local schemes had proved successful.

Dentists (Hygiene)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to introduce regulations to require dentists to comply with stricter hygiene standards.

Mr. Freeman: No. Regulations already exist under which general dental practitioners are required to furnish their surgeries with adequate equipment and to provide treatment with suitable instruments. And in providing general dental services a dentist must employ a proper degree of skill and attention. Any dentist who fails to comply with his terms of service renders himself vulnerable to disciplinary proceedings. In addition a dentist who fails to employ adequate hygiene procedures would be vulnerable to a charge of unprofessional conduct brought against him by the General Dental Council, which in serious cases is able to order the erasure of a dentist's name from the dental register, thus preventing him from carrying out the practice of dentistry.

Medical Indemnity Insurance

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the cost of the proposed National Health Service indemnity insurance scheme.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) on 25 May at column *726*.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the total cost of medical indemnity insurance in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not available on the total cost of medical indemnity insurance, but the full medical rate of subscription to each of the London-based medical defence organisations has been as follows:

Year	*£*
1985	288
1986	336
1987	576
1988	1,080

On 1 January 1989 the Medical Defence Union introduced its 1989 rate of £1,350. On 1 April the Medical Protection Society introduced an annual rate of £1,800 for doctors in certain hospital specialties but retained its 1988 level for the remainder. With effect from 1 July 1989 both organisations reduced the annual rate of GPs to £775.

NHS (Complaints)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement concerning the implementation of HC(88)37 on the implementation of the hospital complaints procedures;

(2) which health authorities have appointed a senior officer to take responsibility for managing the complaint procedures.

Mr. Freeman: Health circular (88)37 gave guidance to health authorities on the procedure to be operated in respect of complaints by hospital patients. It also included, as an annex, directions issued by the Secretary of State as required by section 1 of the Hospital Complaints Procedure Act 1985. These directions instructed health authorities to designate "an officer" with responsibility for handling complaints, and the guidance notes suggested that this should be a "senior officer". All regional health authorities have confirmed that they are in compliance with these directions.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state for the latest year in which information is available, what was the range of actions taken by family practitioner committees in those cases in which the complaint was upheld.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not collected centrally. However, in 1988, 492 practitioners were found in breach of their terms of service and withholdings were directed in 247 cases. In addition, family practitioner committees referred five practitioners to the National Health Service tribunal.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state for the latest year in which information is available, what was the range of actions taken by district health authorities and regional health authorities in those cases in which a complaint was upheld.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not held centrally. Where a complainant is not satisfied with the response he or she receives from a health authority, the complaint can be referred on to the Health Service Commissioner (the Ombudsman). A list of the remedies brought about as a result of the commissioner's investigations is published each year as part of his annual report. A copy is available in the Library.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state, for each district and regional health authority in England, for the latest year in which figures are available *(a)* how many complaints were received, *(b)* how many were found to be justified and *(c)* how many were found to be unjustified.

Mr. Freeman: Available information for the year ending 31 March 1988 is given in the table. Information at district level, and information on the number of complaints upheld, is not held centrally and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

	Total number of written complaints on:	
	Hospital services	*Community services*
England	29,956	5,030
Northern	1,346	387
Yorkshire	2,069	247
Trent	2,191	454
East Anglian	885	80
North West Thames	2,565	371
North East Thames	3,739	545
South East Thames	2,997	301
South West Thames	2,115	891
Wessex	1,497	448
Oxford	991	72
South Western	1,592	218
West Midlands	3,375	476
North Western	2,718	364
Special Health Authorities	544	0

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state, for each district and regional health authority, for the latest year in which figures are available what was *(a)* the shortest time, *(b)* the longest time and *(c)* the median time between the receipt of the complaint and informing the complainant of the outcome.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not held centrally and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state, for each family practitioner committee, for the latest year in which figures are available *(a)* how many complaints were received, *(b)* how many were found to be justified and *(c)* how many were found to be unjustified.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that the information cannot be provided without disproportionate cost. In 1988 there were 1,748 formal investigations of complaints by family practitioner committees in England in which 492 practitioners were found in breach of their terms of service. Information is not available centrally for each family practitioner committee.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state, for each family practitioner committee, for the latest year in which figures are available *(a)* the shortest, *(b)* the longest and *(c)* median time between receiving the complaint and informing the complainant of the outcome.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not available centrally.

Community Charge (Exemptions)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement on the medical advice he has received on the exemption of severe dementia sufferers from the community charge;

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of the advice to be given to general practitioners on the procedures for exempting severely mentally impaired people from the community charge.

Mr. Freeman: Policy on exemptions from the personal community charge is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and we have therefore received no medical advice on the exemption of severe dementia sufferers. However, I understand that advice has been given by my officials to the Department of the Environment.

A copy of the guidance to general practitioners on the procedure to be adopted when exemption from the personal community charge is claimed on grounds of severe mental impairment will be placed in the Library when it is issued.

Young People (Suicide)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the suicide rate among young people for each year since 1979; and what is the rate for the population as a whole.

Mr. Freeman: The information is shown in the table.

Suicide[1] rates (per 1,000,000 population) England and Wales 1979-88

Year	*All ages*	*Age group (years)* 0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29
Males							
1979	106	0	0	3	41	94	127
1980	109	0	0	1	40	90	121
1981	114	0	0	2	42	98	147
1982	115	0	0	2	37	95	147
1983	116	0	0	1	40	96	130
1984	118	0	0	1	43	106	138
1985	121	0	0	1	43	120	151
1986	118	0	0	1	42	130	136
1987	116	0	0	3	53	130	135
1988[2]	125	0	0	2	59	156	145
Females							
1979	64	0	0	2	18	35	46
1980	66	0	0	1	20	40	38
1981	65	0	0	1	13	28	42
1982	59	0	0	2	11	29	44
1983	58	0	0	3	12	33	32
1984	57	0	0	1	10	22	39
1985	57	0	0	1	11	25	34
1986	49	0	0	1	12	27	42

Year	Age group (years)						
	All ages	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29
1987	45	0	0	1	13	28	37
1988[2]	45	0	0	1	15	33	28

[1] International Classification of Diseases (Ninth Revision) E950-E959.
[2] Provisional.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animal Diseases

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the current number of outbreaks of each of the following notifiable diseases in each county in Great Britain: *(a)* anthrax, *(b)* Aujeszky's disease, *(c)* emzootic bovine leukosis, *(d)* paramyxovitus of pigeons, *(e)* sheep scab and *(f)* swine fever.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information is set out in the table.

Number of outbreaks in 1989 to date

	Anthrax	Aujeszky's disease	Enzootic bovine leukosis	Paramyxovirus in pigeons	Sheep scab	Swine fever
County						
Avon	—	—	—	1	—	—
Cheshire	—	—	—	—	1	—
Clwyd	1	—	—	—	—	—
Cornwall	—	—	—	—	4	—
Derby	—	—	—	1	—	—
Devon	1	2	—	—	2	—
Dorset	—	—	—	—	2	—
Dyfed	—	—	—	—	1	—
Essex	—	—	—	1	—	—
Gwynedd	—	—	—	—	1	—
Hereford and Worcester	—	—	—	—	3	—
Lancashire	—	—	—	1	—	—
Leicestershire	—	—	—	1	—	—
Norfolk	—	2	—	—	—	—
Northumberland	—	—	—	1	—	—
Oxford	—	—	—	2	—	—
Powys	—	—	—	—	1	—
Shropshire	—	—	—	—	2	—
Somerset	—	—	—	—	5	—
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—	3	—
Tyne and Wear	—	—	—	1	—	—
West Midlands MC	—	—	—	2	—	—
Wiltshire	—	—	—	—	2	—
Yorkshire MC	—	—	—	1	—	—
Region						
Borders	—	—	—	3	1	—
Perth	—	—	—	3	—	—
Total	2	4	0	18	28	0

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of outbreaks of each of the following notifiable diseases in each county in Great Britain in 1988: *(a)* anthrax, *(b)* Aujeszky's disease, *(c)* emzootic bovine leukosis, *(d)* paramyxovitus of pigeons, *(e)* sheep scab and *(f)* swine fever.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information is set out in the table.

Number of outbreaks in 1988

	Anthrax	Aujeszky's disease	Enzootic bovine leukosis	Paramyxovirus in pigeons	Sheep scab	Swine fever
County						
Berkshire	—	—	—	5	—	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	2	—	—
Cheshire	—	3	1	—	4	—
Cleveland	—	—	—	16	—	—
Clwyd	—	1	—	1	1	—
Cornwall	—	—	—	—	2	—
Cumbria	—	—	—	2	—	—
Derby	—	—	—	11	2	—
Devon	—	—	—	2	3	—
Dorset	—	—	—	—	3	—
Durham	—	—	—	2	—	—

	Anthrax	Aujeszky's disease	Enzootic bovine leukosis	Paramyxovirus in pigeons	Sheep scab	Swine fever
Essex	—	—	—	10	—	—
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	3	1	—
Greater London (N)	—	—	—	7	—	—
Greater London (S)	—	—	—	2	—	—
Greater Manchester MC	—	—	—	8	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	1	1	—
Gwynedd	—	—	—	—	3	—
Hereford and Worcester	—	—	—	2	1	—
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	7	—	—
Humberside	—	—	—	13	—	—
Kent	—	—	—	3	—	—
Lancashire	—	—	—	6	—	—
Leicestershire	—	—	—	15	—	—
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	2	2	—
Merseyside MC	—	—	—	10	—	—
Mid-Glamorgan	—	—	—	1	3	—
Norfolk	—	—	—	14	—	—
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	5	—	—
Northamptonshire	1	—	—	—	—	—
Northumberland	—	—	—	2	—	—
Nottinghamshire	—	—	—	18	—	—
Powys	—	—	—	—	1	—
Shropshire	—	1	—	—	3	—
Somerset	1	—	—	—	4	—
South Glamorgan	—	—	—	1	—	—
South Yorkshire MC	—	—	—	8	—	—
Staffordshire	—	—	—	3	—	—
Suffolk	—	—	—	1	—	—
Surrey	—	—	—	1	—	—
Tyne and Wear	—	—	—	7	—	—
Warwickshire	—	—	—	1	1	—
West Glamorgan	—	—	—	2	—	—
West Midlands MC	—	—	—	3	—	—
West Yorkshire MC	—	—	—	7	—	—
Wiltshire	1	—	—	1	—	—
Region						
Borders	—	—	—	1	—	—
Fife	—	—	—	3	—	—
Grampian	—	—	—	1	—	—
Lothian	—	—	—	—	1	—
Orkney and Shetland Island Area	—	—	—	2	—	—
Strathclyde	—	—	—	3	—	—
Total	3	5	1	215	36	—

Chief Veterinary Officer (Report)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects to publish a report from his Chief Veterinary Officer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The report of the Chief Veterinary Officer "Animal Health 1988" should be published in the middle of August.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 10 July 1989

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tobacco

Mr. Sims: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether expenditure on advertising by the tobacco industry is treated as promotional activities for tax relief purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In calculating their taxable profits, all businesses can deduct expenses (other than capital expenses) incurred wholly and exclusively for the purpose of their trade, including the cost of advertising.

Government Data Network

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will place the operational specifications of the Government data network and its accompanying management summary in the Library.

Mr. Brooke: A copy of the GDN statement of service requirement is in the Library. The service is provided under the terms of a network agreement, the contract between Her Majesty's Treasury and Racal Data Networks Limited, and of access agreements between individual departments and the contractor. I am not aware of other documents which meet the hon. Member's description.

Balance of Payments

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the actual balance of payments position at the end of each of the last 10 years; and what is his present estimate of the position at the end of the current year.

Mr. Lilley: The latest estimate of the current account for each of the last 10 years and the forecast for 1989, published in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1989-90", are set out in the table.

£ million

	Current account	[1] *Balancing item*
1979	−496	1,044
1980	3,122	570
1981	6,936	277
1982	4,685	−2,333
1983	3,893	468
1984	2,077	5,672
1985	3,355	6,150
1986	151	13,700
1987	−2,905	12,356
1988	−14,936	13,878
[2]1989	−14,500	

[1] Indicates errors and omissions in both capital and current account.

[2] Forecast published in Financial Statement and Budget Report 1989-90, rounded to nearest £½ billion.

Charitable Gifts (Tax Relief)

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his reply to the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling on 6 June, *Official Report*, column *120*, what are his reasons for being unwilling to amend the give-as-you-earn scheme to enable the tax relief to accrue to the benefit of the donor's designated charity rather than to the donor.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 22 June 1989]:* If the donor wishes to benefit the charity further, it is a simple matter for him to adjust the size of the donation, subject of course to the annual payroll giving limit.

Forestry

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the annual cost of the tax reliefs available to the forestry industry which were abolished in the Finance Act 1988 for each year 1974 to 1988 at *(a)* cash prices and *(b)* 1989 prices.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* For recent years the annual revenue cost of the right of occupiers of commercial woodlands to elect to be assessed under schedule D is broadly estimated at £10 million.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he estimates will be the annual cost to the Treasury of *(a)* the woodland grant scheme and *(b)* the farm woodland scheme at 1989 prices; and on what planting assumptions these estimates are made.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* Plans in Cm. 604 ("The Government's Expenditure Plans 1989-90 to 1991-92" chapter 4) include the following provision and planting targets for these schemes; costs vary from year to year.

Table 1
Woodland Grant Scheme

	Area of new planting (hectares)	*Forestry Commission grants (£ million)*
1989-90	7,500	4·4
1990-91	16,200	9·4
1991-92	21,180	12·3

Notes:—The figures do not include:

1. Restocking of felled woodland.
2. Planting expected to be carried out under forestry grant schemes other than the Woodland Grant Scheme.
3. Planting in Northern Ireland.

Table 2
Farm Woodland Scheme

	Area of new planting (hectares)	*Planting grants (£ million)*	*Annual payments (£ million)*
1989-90	12,000	6·9	1·0
1990-91	12,000	6·9	3·1
1991-92	12,000	6·9	5·1

Notes:

1. The above figures include Northern Ireland.
2. Annual payments follow 12 months after payment of the planting grants.
3. The farm woodlands scheme was introduced on 1 October 1988 and is to be reviewed at the end of its first three years. The programme for 1991-92 anticipates that that scheme may be extended after the review.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will give the total amount of tax relief given to business expansion scheme investment in housing from its inception to the most recent date for which figures are available and for each of the standard regions, Scotland and Wales;

(2) if he will give the total number of applications approved for housing business expansion scheme investments in housing from its inception to the most recent date for which figures are available and for each of the standard regions of Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* No information on applications or the cost of the business expansion scheme tax relief for investments in residential property is yet available centrally from official sources.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the total amount of tax relief given to business expansion scheme investments in each of the years 1983-84 to 1988-89 inclusive and for each of the standard regions, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* The estimated cost of relief for 1983-84 to 1987-88 is as follows:

	£ million
1983-84	50
1984-85	75
1985-86	85
1986-87	95
[1]1987-88	120

[1] Provisional.

A forecast of £100 million for the cost of relief for the business expansion scheme in 1988-89 was published in "The Government's Expenditure Plans, 1989-90 to 1991-92" (chapter 21), but no information is yet available centrally from official sources to provide a reliable estimate of the outturn.

I regret that reliable estimates of the cost of relief by standard region and country are not available.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the total number of applications approved for business expansion scheme investments in each of the years from 1983-84 to 1988-89 inclusive and for each of standard regions, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* Information on companies receiving investments through the business expansion scheme in 1988-89 is not yet available centrally from official sources. Estimates for earlier years are as follows:

Companies receiving investments (numbers)

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
South East	298	399	342	381	356
East Anglia	28	32	43	40	39
South West	56	64	64	57	68
West Midlands	55	58	51	40	38
East Midlands	38	35	29	23	29
Yorkshire and Humberside	43	45	35	49	42
North and North West	51	86	56	76	68
Wales	20	18	19	19	13
Scotland	59	57	38	47	76
Northern Ireland	7	13	15	10	7
Unknown	60	—	10	—	—
Total	715	807	702	742	738

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the total number of individuals obtaining tax relief for business expansion scheme investments in each of the years 1983-84 to 1988-89 inclusive and for each of the standard regions, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* I regret that information on which to base reliable estimates of the numbers of investors receiving relief is not available centrally.

Thames Riverbus

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what sums under the business expansion scheme or any other provision have been paid to those who set up the Thames riverbus service.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 4 July 1989]:* I regret that I am unable to provide the information requested on the business expansion scheme as details of the use of the scheme by particular individuals and companies are obtained by the Inland Revenue on a confidential basis. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply which my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport gave him on 4 July at columns *91-92* regarding a grant to the company from the Department of Transport.

Taxation

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest available figures for the cumulative amounts since 1979 of *(a)* unclaimed tax relief, *(b)* tax fraud and evasion and *(c)* tax cuts expressed in real terms, 1989 prices.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* I regret that reliable estimates of the amount of unclaimed tax relief and the revenue lost through fraud and evasion are not possible. For information on reductions in income tax I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) of 4 April at column *8*.

THE ARTS

Arts Funding

Mr. Battle: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received on future funding of the arts in 1990-91 and beyond.

Mr. Luce: I announced in November 1988 the provisions for the arts programme for the years 1989-90 to 1991-92.

Museums and Galleries (Oxford)

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last visited Oxford to visit museums and galleries there.

Mr. Luce: I had the pleasure of visiting the Ashmolean museum in Oxford on 3 July this year. On that occasion I was glad to be able to meet members of the local business community and to support an appeal for £3·2 million for the museum.

British Library

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the director of the British library to discuss the level of revenue funding for the library.

Mr. Luce: I met the chairman and chief executive of the British library on 14 March 1989. Our discussion covered the library's long-term plans and Government funding.

Arts Groups (Bulwell)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will examine the possibility of direct funding for the Bulwell and district arts groups.

Mr. Luce: No. I fund the arts on the arm's-length principle. It is for the Arts Council and regional arts associations to determine the allocation of funds to individual arts groups.

Sponsorship

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Minister for the Arts what new measures he is introducing to increase sponsorship of the arts.

Mr. Luce: Since its inception in 1984 the business sponsorship incentive scheme has attracted over 1,000 new sponsors. To encourage even more businesses to support the arts, I have agreed that individual arts organisations may receive up to two awards this year instead of one, up to an aggregate of £25,000.

Merseyside Arts

Mr. Alton: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether Merseyside Arts will continue to be funded as an autonomous unit; and if he will make a statement on its future.

Mr. Luce: I have not yet received Mr. Wilding's report about the structure and organisation of the arts in England. No decisions have yet been taken about the future of Merseyside Arts or any other regional arts association.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Service Careers

Mr. Jack: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what steps he is taking to promote careers in the Civil Service to students and sixth formers studying in Lancashire.

Mr. Luce: The Civil Service Commission, with help from Government Departments, has recently re-established its schools liaison network. The network, which extends to colleges of higher and further education, went fully operational in Lancashire in November 1988 and to date around 35 careers events have been attended. The liaison panel is also establishing closer links with local careers services, for example, by arranging talks and visits to departments.

The Civil Service Commission is also strengthening its links with universities and polytechnics, including those in Lancashire. This includes increased representation at recruitment events, more visits to the institutions, and more direct involvement with their careers service.

Additionally, many local departments are establishing and improving their own links with local academic institutions.

WALES

Environment

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will set out the initiatives *(a)* he has taken since May 1979 and *(b)* intends to take on environmental protection and renewable energies; and if he will make a statement on the state of the environment in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Since May 1979, I have designated two environmentally sensitive areas in Wales. The ESA policy aims to promote the co-existence of conservation and efficient farming in areas perceived to be at risk from increasingly intensive methods of production.

Emphasis on conservation and the control of pollution caused by farm operations has also been strengthened in the new farm and conservation grant scheme introduced in February this year. Three new conservation grants have been launched. These will encourage the regeneration of native woodland and of heather moors and assist in the cost of repairs to vernacular farm buildings. With a grant rate of 50 per cent. towards the cost of farm pollution control, the United Kingdom now has the most comprehensive anti-farm-pollution grant scheme in the European Community. It is only early days, but farmers are already showing increasing interest in applying for grants.

I was also involved with the other Agriculture Ministers in the announcement of the United Kingdom set-aside scheme in June 1988. This constituted a practical guide offering advice and encouraging the management of set-aside land in the best interests of conservation and the environment generally.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I have created a unified inspectorate of pollution with the remit to develop an integrated approach to pollution control. One of our other major initiatives has been to cut the maximum lead content of petrol by 60 per cent. which allied to a reduction in duty on unleaded

making it some 10p cheaper than leaded 4-star, has resulted in unleaded petrol sales increasingly rapidly and currently accounting for almost 20 per cent. of the market.

As to renewable energies, Wales has significant potential in this field, particularly in terms of wind and tidal power. Studies in these two areas are currently being undertaken at a number of sites throughout the Principality.

On 19 June 1989, together with my right hon. Friends the other territorial agricultural Ministers, I issued a consultative document inviting comments on ideas for implementing, for beef and sheep, the European Community extensification scheme in the United Kingdom. Wherever possible, I will wish to ensure that extensification brings enviromental benefits.

Furthermore, together with my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment, I am proposing to bring forward as soon as the parliamentary timetable allows, major legislation dealing with environmental protection. The Bill, among other things, will include measures dealing with air pollution control and reform of the waste disposal law. It will also introduce a new system of integrated pollution control for industry. In addition, we will shortly be announcing a number of proposals for legislation designed to ensure more effective action to be taken against litterers and litter.

Business Finance

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration he has given to the Welsh Committee for Economic and Industrial Affairs' report "Finance for Business in Wales"; and whether he will act on the recommendations which fall within the remit of his office.

Mr. Peter Walker: I met representatives of the committee on 19 June 1989 to discuss their report "Finance for Business in Wales". My officials will pursue with officials of the committee points arising out of that meeting.

Bathing Water (Sewage Outfalls)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if the proposed one-mile screened sewage outfall from Swansea will enable adjacent beach to meet the standards of European Community Bathing Water Directive 76/160/EEC; and what consideration has been given to the consequential effects on the opposite side of the Bristol channel.

Mr. Peter Walker: The identified water adjacent to Swansea bay met the standards of the European bathing water directive 76/160/EEC for the 1988 season. The proposed 1 mile long sea outfall will form part of planned improvements designed with the specific aim of achieving the compliance of the identified waters of Swansea bay with the standards of that directive.

Tidal currents in the Bristol channel, and the enormous dilution afforded, will reduce any impact of this discharge on the north Devon coast to negligible levels.

Water Pollution

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give a breakdown of the likely chemical composition of the water flowing from the Taff and Ely rivers which are to be contained by the proposed Cardiff bay barrage.

Mr. Grist: The 1985 river quality survey showed that the quality of the River Taff varied between classes 1B and 2 and that of the River Ely between classes 2 and 3.

Water quality modelling associated with the proposed Cardiff bay barrage is still being undertaken. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman write to the chairman of the Welsh water authority to obtain the latest position.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the estimated tonnage of sewage disposed of on an annual basis into the rivers of mid-Glamorgan.

Mr. Grist: Information is not available in the form requested. The consented volumes of all consented discharges are entered on to public registers maintained by Welsh Water and available for inspection at its offices during all reasonable hours.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list water supplies in South Wales that meet the minimum quality standards set by the EEC.

Mr. Grist: All water supplies which have not been notified as being subject to derogations or delays under the EC directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption (80/778/EEC) should meet the standards set by that directive.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has assessed whether the proposed 1-mile sewage outfall from Swansea will enable local beaches to attain the standard of European Community directive 76/160/EEC.

Mr. Grist: No. The specific aim of the proposed outfall is to achieve compliance of the identified waters of Swansea Bay with the standards of the directive, but design is at a preliminary stage and engineering studies have yet to be completed. Other local beaches listed under the terms of the directive complied with its standards during the 1988 bathing season.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has made to Welsh Water about sewage contamination on south Wales beaches; and how many of these beaches attain the water standards under directive 76/160/EEC.

Mr. Grist: Welsh Office officials are in touch with Welsh Water concerning their capital programme of improvements to bathing waters. Fifteen of the 22 bathing waters in south Wales listed under the directive complied with its standards during 1988.

Port Dinorwic Yacht Harbour

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many letters his Department has received *(a)* in favour and *(b)* against his planning permission sought for the development of Port Dinorwic yacht harbour; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Following receipt of the planning appeal, the Department received seven letters in favour and 35 against the proposals for the development of Port Dinorwic yacht harbour.

Planning Procedures

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new guidelines he has issued to Welsh Office inspectors considering planning appeals since June 1987; and if he will state the nature and objectives of such changes.

Mr. Grist: In considering appeals in Wales, planning inspectors follow guidance issued generally by the Welsh Office in the form of circulars and planning and mineral policy guidance notes. The Department issues no guidelines specifically to the inspectorate.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what grounds a public inquiry into a planning appeal can be reopened, after having been concluded; what are the procedures for permitting the reopening of an inquiry; who is allowed to submit that an inquiry should be reopened; who decides whether or not to reopen an inquiry following such a request; and on how many occasions in the last five years such an inquiry in Wales has been so reopened.

Mr. Grist: Where an appeal is to be determined by an inspector the current procedures which govern the reopening of the inquiry are contained in rules 17 and 19 of the Town and Country Planning Appeals (Determination by Inspectors) (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 1988 (SI 1988, No. 945). The decision whether or not to reopen the inquiry would be taken by the inspector except where a decision has been quashed in proceedings before any court, where it falls to the Secretary of State to direct that the inquiry be reopened, if he thinks fit. In cases where the appeal is to be determined by the Secretary of State the current procedures are set out in rules 16 and 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 1988 (SI 1988, No. 944). The decision whether or not to reopen the inquiry would be taken by my right hon. Friend. Welsh Office records of planning appeals do not include information relating to the frequency of the reopening of public inquiries.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the general policy guidelines for his Department on town and country planning decisions which may require consideration of whether general economic considerations should overrule phyical and environmental material factors.

Mr. Grist: The appeal system operates on the basis of considering each case on its merits. Proper attention is paid to national and local policies, as expressed in circulars, planning and mineral policy guidance notes and development plans, but regard is also had to the individual circumstances of the applicant, to the need to give encouragement to small businesses and to the employment possibilities presented by commercial and industrial development proposals. All these factors are carefully weighed before reaching decision.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many inspectors he has within his Department who hear town and country planning appeals; and how many of these are Welsh speaking.

Mr. Grist: Fifteen members of the Welsh Office planning inspectorate held public local inquiries; of these two are Welsh speaking.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales in how many instances during each of the past 10 years the Welsh Office has upheld an appeal against a planning refusal in Wales which has involved the construction of more than one house or other domicile; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Welsh Office records of planning appeals do not include the information requested.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what dates since May 1979 circulars have been issued by the Welsh Office on the determination of planning applications in Wales; and if he will list the titles and reference numbers, together with date of issue, for all such circulars.

Mr. Grist: The following list is of extant circulars issued by the Welsh Office since May 1979 which gives advice on the determination of planning applications.

		Date
Jointly with the Department of the Environment		
40/80	Development Control—Policy and Practice	28 November 1980
46/83	Planning Gain	25 August 1983
17/84	Planning Controls over Hazardous Developments	30 March 1984
34/84	Industrial Development	4 September 1984
1/85	Use of Conditions	7 January 1985
3/85	Planning Control over Oil and Gas Operations	15 January 1985
38/85	Development and Employment	16 July 1985
58/85	Guidelines for the Provision of Silica sand in England and Wales	5 November 1985
69/85	Aesthetic Control	10 December 1985
8/86	Development by Small Businesses	20 March 1986
58/86	Policy on Major Retail Developments: Town and Country Planning (Shopping Development) (England and Wales) Direction 1986	18 December 1986
24/87	Town and Country Planning (Use of Classes) Order 1987	6 May 1987
29/87	Disposal of Colliery Spoil	27 July 1987
25/87	Development involving Agricultural Land	8 May 1987
22/87	Development of Contaminated Land	17 August 1987
54/87	Opencast Coal Mining	14 December 1987
1/88	Planning Policy Guidance and Mineral Planning Guidance[1]	20 January 1988
23/88	Environmental Assessment	12 July 1988

		Date
Jointly with the Department of Transport		
42/88	Control of Development on Trunk Roads	30 November 1988
61/81	Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas	Undated
47/84	Land for Housing in Wales	12 September 1984
30/86	Housing for Senior Management	17 June 1986
53/88	The Welsh Language: Development Plans and Development Control	20 December 1988

[1] Since January 1988, the Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment have been issuing policy guidance notes on land-use planning and development control. Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) provide guidance on general and specific aspects of planning policy, while the series of Minerals Planning Guidance notes (MPGs) deals with the control of minerals development.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average cost of planning inquiries held under section 33 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 to *(a)* the Welsh Office, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* the applicant.

Mr. Grist: This information is not available.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Local Management in Schools

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last discussed the implementation of local management in schools with representatives of Cleveland county council; and whether he is satisfied with that county's proposals in respect of this initiative.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has had no meetings with representatives of Cleveland county council specifically to discuss local management of schools (LMS). Officials from the Department's LMS unit have, however, met the LEA and are continuing to offer advice on their proposals. The authority's final scheme will be subject to the Secretary of State's approval; it would not be appropriate for me to anticipate the outcome of the statutory approvals process.

Staff (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many staff from ethnic minorities are employed in his Department in grades 1 to 4.

Mrs. Rumbold: None.

P E Teachers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about his proposal to reduce the number of physical education teachers in schools by 20 per cent.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the provisional allocation of intake numbers for initial teacher training for 1990, which my right hon. Friend announced in April. Representations have been received about the proposals for physical education from nine teacher training institutions and five other bodies.

School Governors (Data Protection)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has issued advice to school governors concerning their legal responsibility to comply with the Data Protection Act when they are in possession or control of a computerised school admissions register; if school governors may volunteer information from registers for community charge purposes; if school governors may provide information from a register to a local education authority and specify that the information cannot be used for community charge purposes; if he has taken legal advice to ascertain whether each board of governors or school is an independent data user from the local education authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has issued no guidance to school governors on their legal responsibilities to comply with the Data Protection Act, but this complex subject is currently being discussed with the office of the Data Protection Registrar. School governors hold and control school admissions registers for the effective exercise of their functions and all authorised circumstances of inspection or disclosure of content of registers are limited to the purposes of the Education Acts. School governors however have no powers to limit the legal requirement whereby community charge registration officers may require local education authorities to provide them with specified information extracted from school registers which is already in the possession of community charge registration officers.

Newcastle University Students Union

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will raise with the governing body of the university of Newcastle the recent actions of Newcastle university students union in breach of section 43 of the Education Act (No. 2) 1986.

Mr. Jackson: I deplore attempts to restrict the rights of particular students and visitors. I understand that the proposal was unacceptable to the university of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and that the union's trustees, whose approval was required, have since refused to endorse the amendment.

Soviet Studies

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide figures showing the numbers of students working in the field of Soviet studies for each year since 1979 at *(a)* undergraduate level and *(b)* postgraduate level.

Mr. Jackson: The numbers of students studying Russian language or Russian studies full-time at British universities were as follows:

	Undergraduates	*Postgraduates*
1979	424	77
1980	410	71
1981	405	55

	Undergraduates	Postgraduates
1982	403	57
1983	453	50
1984	522	52
1985	516	50
1986	539	65
1987	524	49

East European Studies

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps his Department intends to take to give effect to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation council communiqué of 30 May, aimed at encouraging an increase of Soviet and eastern studies in universities of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries and of corresponding studies in eastern countries.

Mr. Jackson: The Department has been concerned for some time to improve teaching and research in Soviet and East European studies, and for this reason encouraged the University Grants Committee to set up a review of the state of undergraduate and postgraduate provision in this subject area. The work of the review working party has been carried forward under the auspices of the Universities Funding Council and I understand that it is due to report shortly. I shall be very interested to see the working party's report and recommendations.

Teachers (Pay Negotiations)

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to hold further discussions with the teacher unions and employers about new pay negotiating machinery for teachers.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: As I told the hon. Members for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) and for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) on 4 July at column *142*, I am arranging to have further meetings with the teacher unions and employers later this month. I see our discussions as ranging more widely than the proposal for a teachers negotiating group set out in the Green Paper of October 1987. I recognise that it will not be easy to find a solution which is acceptable to all parties. It is, however, essential that we get the new arrangements right and I have therefore decided to ask the interim advisory committee to sit for a further year to give time for this. I shall in due course ask the House to approve a one-year extension of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987.

In letters to the teacher unions and employers I have said

"It was clear from our previous exchanges that there are widely differing views. You already know the importance I attach to getting the new arrangements right. With this in mind I see the agenda for our next round of discussions ranging more widely than the proposals for a Teachers' Negotiating Group set out in the Green Paper of October 1987 and look forward to exploring with you a number of new ideas.

I hope you will join me in approaching these difficult issues in a constructive and open minded way, working together towards an objective we can share. I recognise, however, that it will not be easy to get things right. I have therefore decided to ask the IAC to sit for one more year, to deal with the 1990 pay settlement, to give us time to reach an agreed basis for stable, permanent new pay determination arrangements for the future. I will be asking Parliament later this year to agree to the necessary extension of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 and will announce the Committee's new remit in the early autumn."

Teachers' Resignations

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools have submitted resignations in the last 12 months; what are the comparable figures for each preceding year since 1979, and what percentage of each total these figures represent.

Mr. Kenneth Baker *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* Information on the number of teachers resigning in the last 12 months is not yet available.

The numbers of teachers leaving full-time service in the maintained nursery, primary and secondary sector in England in the years ending March 1979 to March 1987 (the latest year for which data are collected by the Department) are as the follows:

	Nursery and primary		Secondary	
	Total leavers, numbers	As a percentage of those in service	Total leavers, number	As a percentage of those in service
1979	15,030	8·0	17,660	7·8
1980	14,970	8·0	19,570	8·5
1981	14,790	8·1	18,720	8·0
1982	13,980	7·9	16,820	7·2
1983	13,120	7·7	16,250	7·0
1984	12,660	7·7	16,920	7·4
1985	12,680	7·9	18,380	8·1
1986	12,450	7·8	18,710	8·4
1987	11,880	7·4	17,080	7·9

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Disbarred Lawyers

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Attorney-General how many (i) barristers and (ii) solicitors have been disbarred from practice in each of the past five years for *(a)* embezzlement, *(b)* incompetence, *(c)* criminal convictions other than fraud and *(d)* other reasons; and what percentage of total practising membership of each profession each annual total represents.

The Attorney-General: The number of barristers disbarred in each of the past five years is as follows:

Year	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	Total	Total Number	Percentage
1984	0	0	2	0	2	5,203	0·04
1985	0	0	1	1	2	5,367	0·04
1986	0	1	0	1	2	5,494	0·04
1987	0	0	1	0	1	5,642	0·02
1988	0	4	2	2	8	5,902	0·14
Total	0	5	6	4	15	—	—

(a) = Embezzlement,
(b) = Incompetence,
(c) = Criminal convictions other than fraud,
(d) = Other reasons.

The information requested on the reasons for solicitors being struck off is not available, but the total number of solicitors struck off in each of the past five years is as follows:

Year	Struck off	Total	Per cent.
1984	18	44,837	0·04
1985	22	46,490	0·05
1986	20	47,830	0·04
1987	32	48,937	0·07
1988	29	50,684	0·06

In the year ending 30 April 1989 a total of 49 solicitors were struck off. Practising certificates are issued during the period 1 November to 31 October and therefore the figure for the number of practising certificates issued in 1989 is not yet available.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Attorney-General what information he has as to the average cost to the Crown Prosecution Service of employing *(a)* a non-civil servant solicitor, *(b)* a civil servant solicitor and *(c)* a barrister in magistrate court prosecutions.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service employs both barristers and solicitors as Crown prosecutors to conduct prosecutions in the magistrates courts. The average annual cost outside London of employing a Crown prosecutor is £29,004 and for a senior Crown prosecutor the cost is £35,805. These figures include general administration expenses and accommodation costs as well as salary costs. In London the average costs are higher.

The Crown Prosecution Service also instructs solicitors and barristers in private practice to conduct prosecutions in the magistrates courts on an ad hoc basis as occasion requires locally. The fees paid to a solicitor in private practice lie between £85 and £150 for a half-day session and £125 and £300 for a full-day session (excluding VAT and travelling expenses) depending on the area of the country and the work involved. The average fee paid to a barrister in private practice for a half-day session is £95 and for a full-day session is £150 (excluding VAT and travelling expenses).

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Policies (Environmental Impact)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the environmental impact of his Department's policies, in terms of noise pollution, toxic waste and radioactive waste management and disposal, requisition of land suitable for agricultural use.

Mr. Ryder: In exercising its responsibilities, including those relating to radioactive and other waste disposal, my Department takes account of the need to protect the environment and people. ADAS advises farmers, where appropriate, on ways to reduce noise levels. The Ministry's powers to requisition land suitable for agricultural use have not been used for some years.

Food Labelling

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to make supermarkets use labels to show whether the meat they sell has been reared and slaughtered humanely; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I have no plans to introduce such legislation which would, I believe, give rise to considerable practical problems regarding compliance and enforcement since it is impossible to distinguish analytically between meat from animals slaughtered or reared in different ways. There is nothing to prevent the provision of this type of information on a voluntary basis.

Horticultural Development Council

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has completed his consultations on the future of the Horticultural Development Council.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friends, the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales, and I have now completed consultations with the council and with organisations representing those carrying on business or employed in the horticultural industry. The National Farmers Union of England and Wales and of Scotland, the Farmers Union of Wales, the Horticultural Trades Association, the Transport and General Workers Union, and the Horticultural Development Council itself, are all in favour of the continuation of the Horticultural Development Council. My right hon. Friends and I have, therefore, decided that it should continue provided it is clear that it has the support of growers themselves. This will be tested by an independent poll to be undertaken in October of all growers registered with the council. Final decisions about the future of the Horticultural Development Council will be taken once the results of the poll is known, and parliamentary approval for the decisions will then be sought.

Near Market Research

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the proposals in his reply of 21 March, *Official Report*, column *515*, to the hon. Member for Daventry to close in 1989-90 the experimental centres at Brogdale, Liscombe, Luddington and Rosewarne.

Mr. MacGregor: There have been full consultations about alternative funding of the experimental centres proposed for closure in my statement of 21 March 1989.

As regards Liscombe experimental husbandry farm, a local industry consortium called Liscombe Research has secured a significant level of commitments by industry to fund a programme of near-market research and development. In view of the progress that has been made, I have decided that Liscombe experimental husbandry farm will not close in 1989-90 as originally proposed, in order to give the consortium more time to collect the balance of funds needed to meet the costs of such a research and development programme in 1991-92. A decision on whether Liscombe experimental husbandry farm can be kept open will be taken later this year when we have reviewed with Liscombe Research the funding arrangements which it is able to agree to for the next few years.

No viable industry funding proposals have been received in relation to the experimental horticultural stations at Luddington and Rosewarne. These stations will accordingly be closed for research and development purposes by 30 November 1989 and arrangements put in hand for disposal of land and facilities surplus to requirements.

Nor has any viable industry funding proposal been received in relation to the Brogdale experimental horticultural station. A decision on the details relating to the closure of this station will be announced later in 1989 when the Government have completed their discussions on arrangements for preserving the national fruit collection and its associated records which are currently located at Brogdale.

Eggs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to ensure the import of shell-eggs takes place only through ports of entry where inspection facilities exist.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is possible to take samples of eggs for inspection at all ports handling food.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state for each month of the current year to date the number of eggs imported into the United Kingdom by country of origin.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The figures are as follows:

Thousands

Country	*January*	*February*	*March*	*April*	[1] *May*
France	972	286	15	8,445	734
Belgium and Luxembourg	491	516	334	1,183	700
Netherlands	8,547	2,839	3,588	19,716	19,603
Federal Republic of Germany	2,692	2,698	2,199	7,522	5,064
Italy	—	—	388	280	—
Irish Republic	21	524	485	743	1,133
Denmark	1,635	680	929	2,139	882
Sweden	—	—	—	—	54
USA	13	10	18	45	2
Total Imports	14,371	7,553	7,956	40,073	28,172

[1] May figures are latest available, subject to alteration.
Source: HM Customs and Excise

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list those points of entry into the United Kingdom used for shell-egg importation and the percentage of imports at each location *(a)* inspected and *(b)* tested;

(2) what action his Department is taking to ensure the quality and wholesomeness of eggs imported into Britain;

(3) what are the arrangements under which his Department ensures the quality and wholesomeness of eggs imported into Britain.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Shell-eggs may be imported through all ports handling food. Arrangements have been made for the port health authorities and the public health laboratory service to monitor imported consignments for salmonella. This is done by taking a sample of 60 eggs from each lorryload tested.

Imported eggs are also checked for compliance with the EC quality requirements by the agricultural Departments. But this checking is carried out at wholesale distribution points.

Quangos

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the appointments he has made to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations together with the salary payable since June 1987.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I regret that I cannot provide a list except at disproportionate cost. However, much information about appointments is given in Ministry press notices and details of remuneration are set out in "Public Bodies 1988", a copy of which is in the Library.

Food Act 1984

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to amend either section 1 or section 2 of the Food Act 1984.

Mr. Ryder: The Government made detailed proposals for re-enacting and updating the powers in sections 1 and

2 as part of their consultations with a large number of organisations on the review of food legislation. We shall be bringing forward a food Bill as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits, which will take account of the responses we have received.

Greenhouse Effect

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department is sponsoring or conducting any research into the cultivation of genetically engineered atmospheric carbon dioxide, as part of the Government programme to combat greenhouse global warming.

Mr. Ryder: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to research into the cultivation of genetically engineered plants to use up atmospheric carbon dioxide, in which case the answer is yes. My Department is supporting research in this area in the context of work on genetic improvement of trees for farm forestry.

Richmond Committee

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the report of the Richmond committee on food safety will be published.

Mr. Ryder: The committee on the microbiological safety of food, chaired by Sir Mark Richmond, has said that it aims to submit its first report to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health as soon as possible probably towards the end of 1989, and that it does not intend to make any interim statements before then. The report will be published.

London Food Commission

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last received a request from the London Food Commission for a meeting; what the stated purpose of the meeting was; whether he agreed to the meeting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: On 15 June the London Food Commission sought a meeting to discuss food irradiation prior to a formal announcement of Government policy on the subject. As this was received only very shortly before the date on which the announcement was due to be made, it was not possible to meet this request. I did, however, arrange for the commission to be sent a copy of the report by officials on the control framework that would be necessary for the introduction of this process.

Intervention Board

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to relocate jobs in the intervention board to the northern region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for Northern Ireland are considering with colleagues the board's proposals to locate part of its work away from the south-east of England.

Press Office

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many people have been employed in his press office by grade for each year for the last five years; what is the current total; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The complement for the press office by grade at 1 April for the last five years is as follows. The current total staff in post is 24, but equivalent information is not available for previous years.

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Chief Information Officer	1	1	1	1	1
Principal Information Officer	1	1	1	1	1
Senior Information Officer/Senior Executive Officer	1	1	1	—	—
Senior Information Officer	—	—	—	4	4
Information Officer/Higher Executive Officer	2	2	1	1	1
Information Officer	—	—	1	4	4
Higher Executive Officer	—	—	—	—	1
Assistant Information Officer/Executive Officer	—	—	1	1	1
Executive Officer	5	5	6	3	1
Administrative Officer	5	5	5	5	5
Administrative Assistant	4	4	4	2	2
Senior Paperkeeper	—	—	1	1	1
Paperkeeper	3	3	3	2	2
Personal Secretary	2	2	2	2	2
Total	24	24	27	27	26

The change in the grade structure of the press office reflects the development of a more professional service in line with the demands of the modern media.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Greenhouse Effect

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what specific proposals his Department has put forward for consideration and enactment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as carbon dioxide and tropospheric ozone, since the seminar on the greenhouse effect held by the Prime Minister on 26 April.

Mr. Newton: The Department is actively involved in the Government's consideration of the United Kingdom and international response to the greenhouse effect. As part of this, we have commissioned studies on CFCs aimed at determining the most effective means of achieving the reductions in the production and use of CFCs to which the Government are firmly committed. More generally, the DTI environmental programme lauched on 10 May is aimed at increasing business awareness of environmental issues and encouraging firms to recognise and respond positively to both the problems and the opportunities they present.

Carpet Industry (Unfair Competition)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action is being taken by the EEC Commission to stop the Belgian Government from subsidising that country's manufacturers of carpets.

Mr. Atkins: The Commission has found that the aid granted to the two subsidiaries, Idealspun and Fabelta, of the Belgian textile concern, Beaulieu, is illegal and incompatible with the Common Market, and has ruled that it must be repaid. In the Idealspun case, the European Court of Justice upheld the Commission and, because the aid has not yet been recovered, the Commission has now instituted legal proceedings against the Belgian Government for failing to fulfil its obligations under the treaty of Rome. In the Fabelta case, misleading assurances were given that the aid had been recovered and the Commission has now taken the Belgian Government to the European Court of Justice for failure to comply with its decision ordering recovery of the aid.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received from the British carpet industry about unfair overseas competition, especially from Belgium, arising from state subsidies available to the Belgian carpet industry.

Mr. Atkins: I am well aware of industry's concern about the provision of state aid to the Belgian carpet industry as a result of various representations received by my Department.

Car Industry (EC Instructions)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has received from the European Economic Community Commission about the respective responses of the French and United Kingdom Governments to the representation and instructions issued by the Commission on British Leyland and Renault cars respectively.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom's 1988 state aid application in respect of the Rover Group was the subject of a Commission decision on 13 July 1988. The Commission has the right to monitor certain aspects arising out of the decision and I have no reason to believe that it is other than satisfied with the current position. In the Renault case I understand that discussions are continuing between the Commission and the French Government on the implementation of the conditions attached to the Commission's decision of 29 March 1988.

Trade Deficit (EC)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish figures showing the trade deficit or surplus of the United Kingdom with each of its EC partners for each year since 1980.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 7 July 1989]:* The figures are given in the table.

United Kingdom crude balances of trade with EC partners 1980-88

£ million

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
France	−254	−353	225	608	1,111	1,136	−1,177	−600	−1,120
Belgium/Luxembourg	−122	−357	−548	−554	−636	−667	−251	−504	−704
Netherlands	441	124	131	337	12	792	−1,181	−1,293	−2,696
Federal Republic of Germany	−587	−425	−1,993	−3,597	−3,604	−3,689	−5,589	−6,379	−8,145
Italy	−394	−588	−712	−918	−905	−827	−1,203	−1,071	−1,711
Irish Republic	870	1,031	886	766	759	814	499	343	178
Denmark	−76	−123	−237	−353	−464	−344	−545	−643	−857
Greece	91	92	104	115	75	15	47	89	111
Portugal	56	35	49	−79	−258	−256	−296	−148	−117
Spain	−95	−48	−70	18	−369	−221	115	65	209

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.
Note: 1988 figures are provisional.

Foreign Investment

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he is able to make an estimate of the level of *(a)* Japanese, *(b)* German and *(c)* American investment in the United Kingdom for each year from 1978 to date.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 7 July 1989]:* Information is available only triennially on the level of Japanese, West German and United States direct investment in the United Kingdom. The latest available figures relate to the end of 1984. These, together with figures to the end of 1978 and end 1981, were published in table 11 of "Business Monitor MO4" (census of overseas assets).

PRIME MINISTER

"Who Framed Colin Wallace?"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will acquire for the Library of No. 10 Downing street a copy of the book, "Who Framed Colin Wallace", by Paul Foot, published by Macmillan's.

The Prime Minister: No.

Overseas Visits (Gifts)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list all those gifts she has received in her official capacity over the past 12 months while on overseas visits.

The Prime Minister: No.

EC Membership

Dr. Godman: To ask the Prime Minister what benefits have been brought to *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow and *(b)* Strathclyde from membership of the European Community.

The Prime Minister: Strathclyde has received substantial benefits from Community membership. Details of major financial awards are as follows:

	Award (£ million)
European Regional Development Fund (Grants) (1979-88)	367
European Investment Bank (Loans) (1978-88)	237
European Coal and Steel Community [1] (Loans) (1979-88)	88
	692

In addition, Strathclyde receives substantial grants for employment and training initiatives under European social fund (£31·5[2] million for 1987-89). A regional breakdown of the grants from the agricultural guidance fund is not available, but Strathclyde has shared in the Scottish total of £385 million[3] (1979-88).

The European Commission has also approved the Strathclyde integrated development operation worth over £270 million in regional and social fund grants up to 1992. A decision is awaited from the Commission on the Government's bid to establish Strathclyde's eligibility under the RENAVAL community programme for shipbuilding areas.

Greenock and Port Glasgow have shared in these awards, although separate statistics for the area are not available. Inverclyde district, however, has received some £34 million in regional fund grants since 1979.

Notes:

[1] Figure relates to Article 56 reconversion loans. Regional breakdown of other ECSC assistance is not available.

[2] Excludes Strathclyde share of UK-wide schemes.

[3] Excludes Scottish share of market support expenditure incurred by the Intervention Board for Agriculture.

Cenotaph (Illumination)

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Prime Minister if she will set in train a study with a view to illuminating on a permanent basis the Cenotaph in Whitehall prior to Remembrance day 1989.

The Prime Minister: Such a study is already in hand. If the outcome is favourable the aim will be to have the lighting installed before Remembrance day 1989.

Sewage Pollution

Mr. Speller: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 4 July, if she will require Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to consider and report on both the 2km sewage outfall from Swansea and the 900m outfall proposed adjacent to Royal Portbury dock in Avon.

The Prime Minister: Before granting a discharge consent for any new sea outfall scheme, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution must be satisfied that any discharges will not cause identified bathing waters in the vicinity to fail to meet the standards of the EC bathing water directive. The length of the outfall required to achieve this will depend on local factors such as tides, currents, depth of water and prevailing winds. Studies to determine the optimal length of the sewage outfall at Royal Portbury dock were carried out prior to the granting of the discharge consent; and similar studies will be carried out for any proposed outfall at Swansea.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inmates were working in prison workshops at Wandsworth prison on 29 June.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A total of 207 inmates were employed on 29 June as follows:

Workshops	*Inmates employed*
Laundry	66
Tailoring	36
Light textiles	36
Leatherwork	22
Woodwork	17
Brushes	30

Sunday Trading

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has recently received about Sunday trading.

Mr. Renton: Between 1 January 1989 and 3 July 1989 we have received 863 written representations broadly in favour of Sunday trading and 1,211 against.

Prison Officers' Houses

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the prison officers' houses, which were vacant in Culcheth, have now been sold; how long they had been empty; what his Department received for the sale of this property; how many houses remain to be sold; when he expects these to be disposed of; if the prison officers' hostel is unsold; how long it has been unused; and what are the plans for this.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All the 39 empty prison officer houses at Culcheth have been sold. Most have been vacant for seven to eight years. These properties, together with the prison officers' hostel, were sold for £540,000. Under the terms of the sale, the purchaser will bring the roads and other services on the whole estate up to the standard required for adoption by the local authority at nil cost to the Home Office. Six further houses that became vacant during 1988-89 are to be sold as soon as possible on the open market. The remaining 67 properties on the estate are used as prison officers' quarters, 47 of which are the subject of applications under the prison service discount sales scheme. The prison officers' hostel, which the purchaser proposes to demolish, has been unused for about seven years. The purchaser proposes to build houses on the site.

Chinese Students

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will establish a special fund to assist Chinese students in the United Kingdom who experience financial difficulties as a result of deciding not to return to China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Chinese nationals who do not qualify under the immigration rules but who do not wish to return to China are being allowed to remain here exceptionally for a further six months. Employment restrictions will be removed in such cases, which will allow those concerned to claim benefit if they are available for employment.

Wakefield Prison

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each month since April *(a)* the minimum staffing levels agreed under fresh start and *(b)* the actual staffing levels, for Her Majesty's prison, Wakefield.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The minimum staffing levels agreed under fresh start at HMP Wakefield as at April 1988 were:

	Morning	*Afternoon*	*Evening*
Saturday and Sunday	80-84	91-99	72
Monday and Friday	99	98	78
Tuesday	101	101	82
Wednesday and Thursday	101	119	82

The only subsequent change to these levels is that since April 1989 the provision for Saturday and Sunday mornings is now 80 to 82. The number of officers in post (including principal and senior officers) at HMP Wakefield in each month since 1 April 1988 is as follows:

	Numbers
1988	
April	406
May	420
June	423
July	425
August	425
September	424
October	423
November	422
December	422
1989	
January	417
February	418
March	418
April	426
May	425
June	425

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions since April 1988 it has not been possible to undertake routine strip searches on prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Wakefield, following domestic visits, because of staffing shortages.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Strip searches are in most cases carried out at the discretion of local management, and have been conducted as considered necessary.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions since April 1988 the association time of rule 43 prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Wakefield, has been curtailed due to staffing shortages.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that loss of association for vulnerable prisoners occurred on four occasions, none of which was due to staff shortages.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the frequency of routine cell searches at Her Majesty's prison, Wakefield.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not the practice to disclose detailed information about security arrangements such as the frequency of cell searches.

Eversure Textiles (Dispute)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the South Yorkshire police giving the latest estimate of the total cost of policing the dispute over trade union recognition at Eversure Textiles in Sheffield; how many police were on duty throughout the first day of the dispute; what has been the minimum and maximum number of police officers on duty each day, to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable that the estimated additional cost of policing the dispute up to and including 6 July is £4,300. There were 34 officers on duty throughout the first day of the dispute. Since the third day, the number of officers deployed has been between eight and 11.

Wrongful Imprisonment

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by constabulary for the past 10 years the number of persons who have been released after wrongful arrest, the numbers of persons who have sued the police for both false imprisonment and injury whilst in custody and the amounts recovered in compensation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Drugs

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been prosecuted for possessing the drug Ecstasy.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The drug MDMA (commonly known as Ecstasy) has been separately identified in the statistics seizures dating back to 1 January 1988. Our provisional figures show that as a result of such seizures made in 1988, a total of 10 persons have been prosecuted for possession.

Private Events (Control)

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has come to a conclusion on the implications of the report from the chief constable of Thames Valley on the incident which occurred on the industrial estate at White Waltham on Saturday 24 June in relation to police powers and penalties.

Mr. Hurd: I have received a further report from the chief constable of Thames Valley police on the events of the weekend of 1 and 2 July 1989. The police were able to take action against a number of parties. The chief constable emphasised the need for good intelligence about the likely location of the parties as the basis for successful enforcement action both by police and local authorities. In at least one case the environmental health officer of the local authority obtained an injunction under the noise control provisions of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. In other cases, the owners of premises have co-operated by withdrawing permission or denying access where no authority had been sought be the organisers.

I set out in reply to earlier questions from my hon. Friend on 29 June at columns *517-18* the comprehensive set of controls which already applies to parties of this kind. It is clear that the main need is for those with advance knowledge of any such party to tell the police so that these controls can be enforced. On this basis, the police in Thames Valley and other police force areas have been able to prevent in advance or shut down a number of such parties which had the potential for disorder recently, some of them potentially large ones.

The police have a range of powers to deal effectively with any criminal offences which may be committed. Steps have been taken to strengthen the police co-ordination and intelligence handling arrangements in order to target enforcement action better.

The public entertainment law already requires organisers to provide adequate standards of safety and hygiene at events of this kind. If that law is ignored, adequate hygiene and safety arrangements may not be made. I am therefore giving further consideration to the need to strengthen the penalties available for breaches of the public entertainment law.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is now in a position to give his Department's provisional response to public requests for further actions to control so called acid house parties and similar pop concert type events.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to give powers to the police to control an ostensibly private party numbering more than 1,000 people which takes place on private land but without the consent of the landowner; and if, where the landowner has agreed to the party taking place, the Secretary of State will provide powers of enforcement for lavatory or first aid facilities to be available and to inform the local constabulary or the local authority in whose area the site for the party is situated.

Mr. Hurd: There is already a comprehensive set of controls which applies to parties of this kind. I refer my hon. Friends to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) today.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

German Reunification

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about German reunification; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave to a question from the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 7 June at column *161*.

Grenada

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Grenadan authorities for the restoration of a constitutional court system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No. As an independent Commonwealth country, it is for Grenada to determine its own judicial system.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Grenadan authorities to lift the death sentence imposed on the defendants in the Grenada 17 trial; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The appeals of all 17 persons convicted in Grenada of the murder of Prime Minister Bishop and of other crimes in 1983 are currently being heard in Grenada's court of appeal. It would be improper for Her Majesty's Government to make representations to the Government of Grenada concerning the 14 appellants sentenced to death while the legal process continues.

Diplomatic Relations

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of state for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with *(a)* Libya and *(b)* Syria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We could not consider restoring diplomatic relations with either Libya or Syria without firm evidence that those countries had given up support for international terrorism.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to the return of British diplomats to Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The embassy will reopen as soon as circumstances permit it to do a useful job. It is still too early to predict when this will be. Meanwhile, officials may from time to time have to visit Kabul to deal with matters relating to the administration and maintenance of our embassy compound. But such visits will in no way affect our attitude towards contacts with the Kabul regime.

Bulgaria

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the numbers of the Turkish minority population of Bulgaria who have been obliged to leave in the course of 1989; what representations he has made to the Bulgarian Government, and with what effect; in which international fora Her Majesty's Government have raised this abuse of human rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We understand that over 100,000 members of Bulgaria's Turkish minority have fled to Turkey since mid-May. It is probable that the first wave, perhaps several thousand, were deported and that the rest have left voluntarily (albeit as a consequence of long-term harassment), taking advantage of a recent relaxation in Bulgaria's laws on travel.

We have made representations bilaterally to the Bulgarian authorities, invoking stage 1 of the "human dimension" mechanism of the CSCE Vienna concluding document. Numerous other countries have made similar demarches. We also drew attention to the plight of Bulgaria's Turkish minority during the recent conference on the human dimension of the CSCE in Paris. The Bulgarian authorities have provided some information on their policies, but have not so far taken steps to improve the lot of the Turkish minority. We have also raised this matter regularly in UN fora.

We call on the Bulgarian authorities to ensure that those who wish to leave for Turkey may do so in an orderly fashion, and that the rights of those who wish to remain in Bulgaria are respected.

Drugs

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will arrange for inquiries to be made by Her Majesty's representatives in Lisbon as to the manufacturers' list price in Portugal for the drugs listed and ensure that the information contains details of pack size, whether any discounts are available and the terms Adalat 10 mg caps, Adalat retard 20 mg caps, Aldomet 250 mg caps, Amoxil 500 mg caps, Brufen 400 mg tabs, Capoten 25 mg tabs, Feldene 10 mg caps, Feldene 20 mg tabs, Gaviscon liq 250, Inderal LA 160 mg tabs, Natrilix 2·5 mg tabs, Prothiaden 75 mg tabs, Septrin tabs, Serc tabs, Tagamet 200 mg tabs, Tagamet 400 mg tabs, Timoptel eye dps 0·5 per cent., Ventolin inhaler, Zantac 15 mg tabs and Zyloric 300 mg tabs;

(2) if he will arrange for inquiries to be made by Her Majesty's representatives in Brussels as to the manufacturers' list price in Belgium for the drugs listed and ensure that the information contains details of pack size; whether any discounts are available, and the terms Adalat 10 mg caps, Adalat retard 20 mg caps, Aldomet 250 mg caps, Amoxil 500 mg caps, Brufen 400 mg tabs, Capoten 25 mg tabs, Feldene 10 mg caps, Feldene 20 mg tabs, Gaviscon liq 250, Inderal LA 160 mg tabs, Natrilix 2·5 mg tabs, Prothiaden 75 mg tabs, Septrin tabs, Serc tabs, Tagamet 200 mg tabs, Tagamet 400 mg tabs, Timoptel eye drops 0·5 per cent., Ventolin inhaler, Zantac 150 mg tabs and Zyloric 300 mg tabs;

(3) if he will arrange for inquiries to be made by Her Majesty's representatives in Paris as to the manufacturers' list price in France for the drugs listed and ensure that the information contains details of pack size; whether any discounts are available, and the terms Adalat 10 mg caps, Adalat retard 20 mg caps, Aldomet 250 mg caps, Amoxil 500 mg caps, Brufen 400 mg tabs, Capoten 25 mg tabs, Feldene 10 mg caps, Feldene 20 mg tabs, Gaviscon liq 250, Inderal LA 160 mg tabs, Natrilix 2·5 mg tabs, Prothiaden

75 mg tabs, Septrin tabs, Serc tabs, Tagamet 200 mg tabs, Tagamet 400 mg tabs, Timoptel eye drops 0·5 per cent., Ventolin inhaler, Zantac 150 mg tabs and Zyloric 300 mg tabs;

(4) if he will arrange for inquiries to be made by Her Majesty's representatives in Madrid as to the manufacturers' list price in Spain for the drugs listed and ensure that the information contains details of pack size; whether any discounts are available, and the terms Adalat 10 mg caps, Adalat retard 20 mg caps, Aldomet 250 mg caps, Amoxil 500 mg caps, Brufen 400 mg tabs, Capoten 25 mg tabs, Feldene 10 mg caps, Feldene 20 mg tabs, Gaviscon liq 250, Inderal LA 160 mg tabs, Natrilix 2·5 mg tabs, Prothiaden 75 mg tabs, Septrin tabs, Serc tabs, Tagamet 200 mg tabs, Tagamet 400 mg tabs, Timoptel eye drops 0·5 per cent., Ventolin inhaler, Zantac 150 mg tabs and Zyloric 300 mg tabs;

(5) if he will arrange for inquiries to be made by Her Majesty's representatives in Athens as to the manufacturers' list price in Greece for the drugs listed and ensure that the information contains details of pack size; whether any discounts are available, and the terms Adalat 10 mg caps, Adalat retard 20 mg caps, Aldomet 250 mg caps, Amoxil 500 mg caps, Brufen 400 mg tabs, Capoten 25 mg tabs, Feldene 10 mg caps, Feldene 20 mg tabs, Gaviscon liq 250, Inderal LA 160 mg tabs, Natrilix 2·5 mg tabs, Prothiaden 75 mg tabs, Septrin tabs, Serc tabs, Tagamet 200 mg tabs, Tagamet 400 mg tabs, Timoptel eye drops 0·5 per cent., Ventolin inhaler, Zantac 150 mg tabs and Zyloric 300 mg tabs;

(6) if he will arrange for inquiries to be made by Her Majesty's representatives in Rome, as to the manufacturers' list price in Italy for the drugs listed and ensure that the information contains details of pack sizes whether any discounts are available and the terms Adalat 10mg caps, Adalat retard 20mg caps, Aldomet 250mg caps, Amoxil 500 mg caps, Brufen 400mg tabs, Capoten 25mg tabs, Feldene 10mg caps, Feldene 20mg tabs, Gaviscon liq 250, Inderal LA 160mg tabs, Natrilix 2·5mg tabs, Prothiaden 75mg tabs, Septrin tabs, Serc tabs, Tagamet 200mg tabs, Tagamet 400mg tabs, Timoptel eye drops 0·5 per cent, Ventolin inhaler, Zantac 150mg tabs and Zyloric 300mg tabs.

Mr. Eggar: No. Her Majesty's embassies do not have the resources to undertake inquiries of this nature which, in any case, can be pursued through normal commercial channels.

Iraq

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will reconsider the imposition of economic sanctions and the ending of export credits to Iraq in the light of the mass evictions of Kurdish Iraqi citizens from border areas and the Iraqi Government's refusal to allow independent observers into the depopulated area.

Mr. Waldegrave: We do not believe that unilateral economic measures would be effective in ending human rights abuses in Iraq. It is better to maintain a working relationship if we are to influence Iraq's behaviour. We continue to press the Iraqi authorities for full details of their present resettlement programme, and to allow diplomats and journalists to be able to visit the areas concerned.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether he has obtained details from the Iraqi Government on which towns and villages in Iraqi Kurdistan have been depopulated in recent weeks;

(2) whether, in the light of the Iraqi ambassador's recent statement of the Iraqi Government's intention to depopulate an additional stretch of Iraq's border, he has obtained the names of the towns and villages within this area which now face imminent eviction of the population.

Mr. Waldegrave: We continue to press the Iraqi authorities for details of their Kurdish resettlement programme. The Iraqi Government also issued a statement on 26 June providing some further information.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the eviction of Kurds from border areas in Iraq.

Mr. Waldegrave: We remain seriously concerned at allegations of forced resettlement of Kurds in northern Iraq. We continue to press the Iraqi authorities to allow journalists and diplomats to visit the areas concerned to see for themselves.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the report of European Community representatives in Baghdad on the human rights situation in Iraq will be made available in the Library.

Mr. Waldegrave: Reports compiled by EC ambassadors are confidential documents under the rules of European political co-operation. It is not, therefore, open to us to make such reports publicly available.

European Court

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many of the decisions of the European Court have not yet been implemented by each of the member states of the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: According to table 10 of the "Official Journal of the European Communities" C310, volume 31 of 5 December 1988 (available in the Library), at 31 December 1987 the information was as follows:

	Number
Italy	28
Belgium	10
Germany	9
France	5
Netherlands	4
Greece	4
Denmark	2
United Kingdom	2
Ireland	1

The two judgments listed against the United Kingdom have now been implemented.

EMPLOYMENT

Accident Rates

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the accident rate per 1,000 trainees on YTS and for employees generally.

Mr. Cope: The rate of accidents reported to the Training Agency per 100,000 trainees on YTS in the year ended 31 March 1988 was 804. This includes types of accidents which would not be reportable to HSE in the case of employees generally. The rate of accidents to all employees reported to HSE in the same year was 734 per 100,000, but this figure does not allow for the known substantial under-reporting, so the figures are not comparable.

Detailed research shows that YTS trainees are no more at risk than employees generally and could be less so.

Tourism

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the section 4 tourism grant scheme.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) on 6 July.

Wages Councils

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many firms have been discovered in contravention of wages council legislation, per inspector, for each year since 1970.

Mr. Nicholls: Wages inspectorate statistics are compiled in terms of establishments rather than firms. With this proviso, the information requested is in the following tables. The figures under each heading are not mutually exclusive.

	1970	*1971*	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*
Average number of establishments found per inspector not displaying notices or having inadequate notices	105	96	80	76	73	74	69	61	57	54
Average number of establishments found per inspector not keeping time records or keeping inadequate time records	200	191	164	161	146	143	123	114	108	105
Average number of establishments found per inspector not keeping wage records or keeping inadequate wage records	40	46	41	40	36	35	28	26	26	26
Average number of establishments found per inspector not giving statutory customary holidays	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Average number of establishments found per inspector not giving statutory annual holidays	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	2	2	4	5	7
Average number of establishments found per inspector underpaying holiday remuneration	28	23	23	26	28	31	31	30	26	21
Average number of establishments found per inspector underpaying (other than holiday remuneration)	38	37	45	53	47	66	72	72	62	61

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Average number of establishments found per inspector not displaying notices or having inadequate notices	59	58	57	64	74	70	87	84	117
Average number of establishments found per inspector not keeping time records or keeping inadequate time records	102	98	88	98	101	94	114	90	106
Average number of establishments found per inspector not keeping wage records or keeping inadequate wage records	27	23	20	22	17	13	15	17	23
Average number of establishments found per inspector not giving statutory customary holidays	<1	1	1	1	1	1	2	not applicable	
Average number of establishments found per inspector not giving statutory annual holidays	6	6	5	4	5	4	6	not applicable	
Average number of establishments found per inspector underpaying holiday remuneration	21	26	26	25	29	25	31	not applicable	
Average number of establishments found per inspector underpaying (other than holiday remuneration)	69	73	61	64	53	50	58	59	82

Factory Inspectors

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of factory inspectors in post *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* currently; and what are the reasons for the change.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 April 1979, 742 factory inspectors were in post in the Health and Safety Executive. On 1 July 1989, the total was 621·5 compared with 592 on 1 April 1988.

In order to contain public sector manpower and spending there were staff reductions in HSE, as in the Civil Service as a whole. HSE continues to meet its responsibilities with improvements in efficiency brought about by the use of careful targeting.

Increased Government provision to the Health and Safety Commission and Executive over previously planned levels of £6·7 million gross for 1988-89 and £8·3 million gross for 1989-90 have allowed the Executive to increase factory inspector numbers. The Executive plans to have 640 factory inspectors in post by April 1990.

Employment Training

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which of those local authorities listed as participating in employment training, *Official Report*, 27 February, columns *34-38* as training managers and training agents have now withdrawn from the scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: The following local authorities participating in employment training as training managers have now withdrawn from the scheme:

Barrow borough council
London borough of Barnet
London borough of Merton
Nottinghamshire county council
Rochdale Metropolitan borough council.

Wolverhampton metropolitan borough council will not be renewing their existing contract at the end of August 1989. Similar action is expected from Leicester city council and Cleveland county council.

HEALTH

Administrative and Clerical Staff

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many whole-time equivalent administrative and clerical staff were employed in the National Health Service in England on *(a)* 30 September 1979, *(b)* 30 September 1987 and *(c)* 30 September 1988.

Mr. Mellor: The information is shown in the table.

NHS staff in post in England at 30 September
Whole-time equivalents[1]

	Administrative and clerical[2,3]
1979	103,000
1987	114,600
1988[4]	116,300

[1] Figures are rounded to nearest one hundred (100) whole-time equivalents.
[2] Includes general managers.
[3] Figures for 1987 and 1988 include some "Other Statutory Authorities" staff not included in previous years (some 700 WTE in 1987).
[4] 1988 figure is provisional.
Source: Department of Health annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each regional health authority and for England as a whole the total in-patient waiting list recorded in each hospital waiting list return since 1 January 1974.

Mr. Mellor: The total in-patient waiting list for each regional health authority and for England in each year since 1974 is given in the table.

In-patient waiting list[1], by Regional Health Authority, England, 1974-1988

Region	*31 December 1974*	*30 September 1975*	*30 September 1976*	*30 September 1977*	*30 September 1978*	*30 September 1979*	*30 September 1980*	*30 September 1981*	*30 September 1982*	*30 September 1983*	*30 September 1984*	*30 September 1985*	*30 September 1986*	*30 September 1987*	*30 September 1988*
Northern	29,178	32,635	34,364	33,659	35,677	42,288	35,538	33,105	49,958	44,478	38,798	36,154	36,880	34,898	36,044
Yorkshire	31,468	32,877	34,689	37,165	39,903	47,223	40,982	37,701	53,033	48,363	47,026	45,763	46,597	47,689	51,279
Trent	44,717	46,867	50,885	52,154	58,516	66,498	57,895	56,851	73,509	69,156	63,334	62,190	60,842	54,442	53,076
East Anglian	19,390	18,106	22,031	22,408	25,636	27,971	25,772	25,596	32,935	33,080	31,148	27,388	27,860	30,960	33,417
North West Thames	37,939	38,563	43,421	41,640	42,870	43,595	42,476	41,587	40,785	41,015	40,032	40,265	43,710	40,273	44,770
North East Thames	37,622	35,570	41,077	43,543	46,045	53,146	49,032	48,515	58,397	58,911	63,563	66,406	74,926	71,812	79,384
South East Thames	39,286	38,793	45,797	45,798	47,398	49,920	45,484	45,559	51,820	51,627	51,642	50,887	56,788	56,794	53,619
South West Thames	25,767	25,093	30,293	30,579	33,538	37,244	34,540	33,923	36,656	37,470	35,389	36,752	36,073	34,185	41,005
Wessex	29,148	29,669	32,591	32,533	35,809	40,222	38,173	40,275	45,317	46,879	45,227	42,080	42,726	43,217	41,607
Oxford	28,913	25,972	31,606	31,480	36,065	36,180	33,900	32,562	35,734	36,082	35,339	33,309	33,240	31,343	32,996
South Western	40,842	42,718	44,389	46,177	45,175	43,876	43,691	42,821	47,142	47,534	46,562	43,639	45,686	40,894	43,411
West Midlands	60,766	63,351	72,536	74,662	79,397	87,693	80,937	79,932	86,564	83,598	83,119	80,974	79,261	74,965	72,441
Mersey	24,813	25,344	30,221	28,803	31,165	38,572	34,080	33,105	37,674	34,274	31,480	30,141	30,126	30,345	32,121
North Western	60,236	58,168	66,893	64,560	63,123	71,948	65,513	60,252	69,697	62,525	59,417	58,465	61,143	62,899	63,839
Special health authorities	7,339	6,036	7,469	7,935	8,044	7,390	7,888	7,589	7,054	7,763	8,623	7,713	8,054	9,145	8,044
England	517,434	519,552	588,264	591,096	628,361	695,726	635,881	619,393	725,865	703,735	682,599	661,249	681,901	661,161	691,073

Nurses

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for the latest available date and for each district health authority and regional health authority the total number of nursing posts, the number of vacant nursing posts and the latter as a percentage of the former; and the number of nursing posts for qualified nurses, the number of vacant posts for qualified nurses and the latter as a percentage of the former.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list for each health region the complete hospital closures since January 1979 giving, in each case *(a)* the name and address of the hospital, *(b)* the area health authority or district health authority, *(c)* the number of beds, *(d)* the type of hospital and *(e)* the date of closure;

(2) if he will list for each health region the partial hospital closures since January 1979 giving, in each case *(a)* the name and address of the hospital, *(b)* the area

health authority or district health authority, *(c)* the number of beds, *(d)* the type of hospital and *(e)* the date of closure.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 11 May at column *497* which refers to lists, placed in the Library of all hospitals/units approved for full or partial closure, by region and district and in year order, since 1979. The further information requested is not available centrally.

Prescriptions

Sir Neil Macfarlane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of prescriptions dispensed and the total net ingredient cost for England and Wales, for the years 1977 to 1988.

Mr. Mellor: The number of prescriptions dispensed in England during the period together with the net ingredient cost before discounts and excluding dispensing fees are:

	Prescriptions millions	*Net ingredient cost £ million*
1977	311·1	456·3
1978	323·6	544·7
1979	321·3	623·4
1980	320·4	754·6
1981	317·3	880·3
1982	329·5	1,031·8
1983	333·9	1,157·6
1984	340·6	1,252·1
1985	339·9	1,329·0
1986	344·4	1,453·1
1987	358·5	1,636·1
1988	371·0	1,852·2

The information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Medical Records

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received concerning the right of access of patients to medical records; what replies he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There have been a number of representations over the years. The number increased after the Access to Personal Files Act became law. During its passage through the House medical records were excluded from its provisions but the Government undertook to have talks with the medical profession about a voluntary code of practice on access to medical records. These talks have resulted in a draft code, on which the Department is consulting interested parties such as doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives, health visitors, patient interest groups and NHS management. As soon after that consultation as is practicable the Department will issue the code. A copy of the draft code is in the Library.

Disabled People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been during each of the last three years *(a)* the total assistance and grants given by his Department to help disablement organisations and *(b)* grants given in each of these years to the British Council of organisations of disabled people; and if he will review his adequacy of support being given to those organisations which involve disabled people directly, in the policy development and decision taking affecting the well-being of disabled people.

Mr. Freeman: With regard to grants to help disablement organisations, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), on 18 April 1989 at columns *133-34*. Grants to the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People have been as follows:

Year	*£*
1986-87	10,000
1987-88	4,500
1988-89	10,000

We do support the work of many organisations which involve disabled people directly and expect to do so increasingly in the future as new bodies become established.

Eye Tests

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will extend his Department's definition of a near relative of glaucoma sufferers in his criteria for free eye tests to include nephews and nieces.

Mr. Mellor: The criteria that free NHS sight tests should be available to parents, brothers, sisters or children aged 40 years or over of diagnosed glaucoma sufferers was reached after advice from doctors and full consultation with other interested parties. We have no plans to change or extend this definition to include nephews, nieces, any other relative or age group.

Cook-Chill Food

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department has carried out into the health effects of nutrient depletion on long stay patients in hospitals whose diet is mainly cook-chill meals.

Mr. Freeman: The recent review of cook-chill and cook-freeze guidelines by an expert group took into account relevant scientific papers and drew upon its expert knowledge. The expert group concluded that, providing the guidelines are followed, food produced by the cook-chill system is as good nutritionally as food from conventional catering.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to introduce the temperature regulations recommended in the Social Services Select Committee report on listeria in respect of cook-chill retailed food and cook-chill catered food.

Mr. Freeman: Draft regulations which embody new storage temperature requirements were issued for consultation on 4 July 1989. We intend to make new regulations later this year.

Dental Charges (Refunds)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many applicants for a refund of their dental charges have been turned down since the introduction of charges on the grounds that they did not claim within one month of the original payment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Feeeman: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Blood

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the profit made by the blood transfusion service on each 1,000 pints of donated blood bought by private sector health institutions; what method is used to determine the price at which blood will be sold to the private sector; how much blood was sold in total for each of the last 10 years to the private sector for all blood groups and the rarest blood groups; what was this as a percentage of total blood donations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No profit is made on any blood or blood components supplied to non-NHS hospitals by the national blood transfusion service. Since 1 April 1984 charges have been made to the private sector to recover the cost to the NHS of collection, processing, handling and transport. No charge is made for the blood itself. Information about the groups supplied is not held centrally. Blood issued to non-NHS hospitals is shown in the table.

National Blood Transfusion Service: England and Wales[1].

Year	*Total blood donations*	*Units of blood issued to non-NHS hospitals*	*Units of blood issued as a percentage of total donations*
1979	2,020,919	n/a	n/a
1980	2,094,177	n/a	n/a
1981	2,127,432	n/a	n/a
1982	1,942,997	31,437	1·6
1983	2,017,018	40,786	2·0
1984	2,038,937	49,232	2·4
1985	2,007,931	54,327	2·7
1986	2,023,841	64,040	3·2
1987	1,989,779	84,361	4·2
[2]1988	2,033,005	75,961	3·7

[1]The figures relate to Wales and 12 regions in England as information is not available for Oxford region.
[2] Provisional.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether blood donation shortages have been reported to his Department in any of the last 10 years by any public body for use by National Health Service institutions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that systematic information about representations received over the last 10 years could not be supplied except at disproportionate cost. Up to 1 October 1988 the day-to-day responsibility for maintaining blood supplies rested with regional transfusion centres (RTCs) and the Department would not necessarily have been informed of any local shortages. The national directorate of the blood transfusion service was established from 1 October 1988, and arranges the transfer of blood to RTCs experiencing temporary shortages.

Eggs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many consignments of imported eggs have been impounded on the grounds of poor quality since 1 December 1988;

(2) how many consignments of imported eggs have been condemned by officials of his Department since 1 December 1988.

Mr. Mellor: It is not practicable for port health authorities to impound or condemn any imported egg consignments because of the time needed by public health laboratories to produce confirmation test results.

The arrangements are that any positive findings are reported to the Department and the relevant producer country is then advised so that action can be taken to deal with the contamination at source.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those public health laboratories which participate in testing consignments of imported eggs.

Mr. Mellor: Reports on tests on samples of imported eggs have so far been received from public health laboratories at Ashford, Hull, Ipswich and Norwich.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements he has agreed with port authorities for the testing of samples of imported eggs at public health laboratories.

Mr. Mellor: Since 4 April 1989 port health authorities have agreed to check as many consignments of imported eggs as practicable and to notify the Department where public health laboratory reports of contaminated eggs are received.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what resources he has made available to public health laboratories specifically to enable them to conduct tests on samples of consignments of imported eggs.

Mr. Mellor: Funding for public health laboratories involved with the testing of imported egg samples is contained within their overall resource allocation.

Children Bill

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate for the costs of staff training arising from the provisions of the Children Bill.

Mr. Mellor: One off costs of staff training arising from the Children Bill are estimated at £4·6 million at 1988-89 levels for local authority staff. The estimates have been dicussed with the local authority associations and will be reviewed when the level of central Government support for local authority expenditure is determined. There will also be costs of training judicial and court staff which are a mater for my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Community Care

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will outline the procedure he will be establishing for inspecting and monitoring the quality of community care services provided by the private and voluntary sectors;

(2) under the new arrangements, which agency will have primary responsibility for people who are mentally ill and are also either elderly or have a physical handicap;

(3) what safetguards will be established to protect consumer should services provided by private or voluntary organisations for community care go out of business or fail to meet national quality standards.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have been considering the future organisations and management of community care services following Sir Roy Griffiths report "Community Care: Agenda for Action" and the many views received in response to it. Its deliberations are now complete and we hope to make a statement this week.

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has for ring fencing National Health Service resources to ensure funding released by the closure of wards and hospitals will be directed towards community care.

Mr. Mellor: Health authorities must remain responsible for determining their own expenditure priorities in the light of their knowledge of local needs and circumstances.

OPCS

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will announce the result of his review of the future location of the work of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Mr. Freeman: Yes. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) has three main sites in London, Titchfield and Southport where there are about 660, 840 and 600 staff respectively. The number of staff at the Southport site is expected to fall by about 250 during 1991 as a result of the computerisation of the NHS central register.

I have concluded that most of the division which oversees the registration of births, marriages and deaths, now based largely in London, should move to Southport. It is having great difficulty in recruiting and retaining administrative staff in London, and the effectiveness and efficiency of its operation is being jeopardised. about 170 posts from London and about 80 posts from Titchfield will move to Southport. Some other services at present based in London, mainly in central support areas, will move to Titchfield when accommodation becomes available there. The moves will be co-ordinated with the planned run-down of other Southport work and will probably be completed by mid 1992.

Both the public search room and the OPCS library, which are used regularly by the public, will remain in London. The professional statistical work of OPCS, covering population and medical statistics, the census and social surveys, will also remain in London because of the importance of day to day links with customers in Government Departments, which have been strengthened in accordance with the machinery of Government review in 1986.

ENERGY

British Petroleum

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will use his departmental shareholding in British Petroleum to put pressure on British Petroleum to stop its destruction of parts of the Jamari rain forest in Brazil.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply.

No. The Government now hold only about 2 per cent. of the ordinary share capital of British Petroleum plc. Even when their shareholding was much larger, the Government did not use their rights as a shareholder to intervene in the commercial decisions of the company.

Research and Development

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list Government expenditure on research and development in the area of energy efficiency for the years 1981, 1983, 1985, 1987 and 1989;

(2) if he will list the proposed funding for research and development in the area of energy efficiency for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92;

(3) what amount of funding is being allocated to research and development in the area of energy efficiency in the current financial year.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information requested is as follows:

Expenditure on energy efficiency research, development and demonstration[1,2]

Year	*£'000s*
1980-81	2,015
1982-83	6,841
1984-85	6,564
1986-87	8,197
1988-89	9,077
1989-90	8,850

[1] For the year 1989-90 the figure is the estimate provision. Prior years are outturn.
[2] All figures exclude expenditure on the monitoring and targeting programme.

Figures for future years will be published shortly in the 1989 Annual Review of Government-Funded R & D.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give a breakdown of his Department's spending on research and development in the following sources of energy for 1988, its plans for 1989 and its plans for future years *(a)* nuclear fission in thermal reactors, *(b)* nuclear fission in fast breeder reactors, *(c)* nuclear fusion, *(d)* renewable energy sources as a whole, *(e)* tidal power, *(f)* solar, *(g)* windpower, *(h)* wave power, *(i)* biofuels, *(j)* wet rock geothermal, *(k)* dry rock geothermal, *(l)* other renewable sources, *(m)* conventional fossil fuel sources and *(h)* any other sources of energy; and whether he will give comparable figures for other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The figures requested are as follows:

Expenditure in £ million

	1988-89	*1989-90*
Thermal reactors (safety research only)	19·53	17·27
Fast breeder reactor	104·55	98·58
Fusion	26·21	26·60
All renewables	15·01	16·80
Tidal	1·18	1·00
Solar	1·42	1·90
Wind	3·91	5·00
Wave	0·14	0·20
Biomass	1·48	2·00
Wet rock geothermal	0·06	0·15
Dry rock geothermal	3·50	2·90
Other renewable	3·32	3·65
Fossil fuels	0·72	2·56
Other sources of energy	—	—

Figures for future years will be published shortly in the 1989 Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development, in the usual format for that publication.

Figures for other European Community countries can be found in the annual review published by the

International Energy Agency "Energy Policies and Programmes of IEA Countries", the most recent of which was produced in 1988. Expenditure figures and forecasts for other countries may not be on the same basis as for the United Kingdom.

Nuclear Generating Stations

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the estimated value of the nuclear generating sectors of the Central Electricity Generating Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on 19 October 1988 at column *859*.

Nuclear Power Stations

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the estimated operating lifespans of the United Kingdom's remaining nuclear power stations in commission.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operating matter for the utilities concerned. I have asked the chairmen of the CEGB and SSEB to reply to the hon. Member.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he intends proceeding with his plan to include the nuclear power plants within electricity privatisation; whether he intends transferring the ownership of physical assets of nuclear power plants currently owned by the Central Electricity Generating Board to the private sector; what is his latest estimate of the costs of decommissioning nuclear power stations and disposing and reprocessing of nuclear waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The Government's plans for privatising the electricity industry were set out in the White Paper, "Privatising Electricity" (Cm. 322) and in the Electricity Bill, and were debated at length during the passage of the Bill. These remain the Government's policy.

The CEGB estimates that the average cost of decommissioning each of its existing nuclear power stations, in current prices and assuming a delay of around 100 years before the final stage of decommissioning, will be about £300 million, including the costs of disposal of waste arising. The costs of reprocessing spent fuel will depend on the commercial negotiations between the CEGB and BNFL which are currently underway.

Electrical Appliances (Efficiency)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans *(a)* to introduce legislation to ensure that electrical appliances are labelled to give details of their energy use so that consumers may choose the most energy efficient brand of any given type of appliance and *(b)* to press the European Communities to regulate to ensure labelling of electrical appliances.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on 16 May 1988 at column *299* and to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 20 February 1989 at columns *470-71*.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to press the European Communities to regulate the energy efficiencies of electrical appliances to ensure that they achieve minimum efficiency standards that would be set by the EC and updated along with technological developments.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No.

Mr. Elliot Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether his Department has evaluated claims that use of electricity could be reduced by 70 per cent. without reducing the present level of electricial services if the most energy efficient electrical appliances currently available were used throughout the country, and if other conservation measures including combined heat and power/district heating schemes, prohibiting wasteful energy systems, tightening building regulations' were introduced.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Energy Efficiency Office is in the process of commissioning a study on the energy efficiency of electrical appliances. However, improvements in efficiency in domestic appliances, as with improvements in industrial processes, and construction and use of combined heat and power systems, do not necessarily lead to a reduction in the use of electricity. The increased efficiency may be taken as increased warmth or increased production, and increased energy efficiency may mean changing from another fuel to electricity.

Environmental Damage

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out the conclusions of his Department's evaluation of the environmentally damaging aspects of *(a)* nuclear power, *(b)* coal-fired power plants, *(c)* oil-fired power plants, *(d)* gas-fired power plants, *(e)* large scale inland hydropower, *(f)* low-head hydropower, *(g)* estuarial power generating tidal barrages, *(h)* wind power, *(i)* solar water heating, *(j)* photoelectric solar power, *(k)* pump-storage power schemes, *(l)* off-shore wave power, *(m)* on-shore wave power, *(n)* ocean thermal electric power, *(o)* geothermal power, *(p)* refuse fuelled power plants, *(q)* biomass fuelled power plants and *(r)* combined heat and power pebble-bed/fluidised bed plants; and if he will make a statement on the benefits of each type of plant in regard to mitigation of greenhouse global warming.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The latest comprehensive and systematic evaluation of the full range of energy supply technologies undertaken for my Department was reported in Energy Paper 54 and its complementary "background papers" volume ETSU-R-43. Both of these publications are available in the Library of the House. Thy describe in general terms the principal environmental impacts of each technology. Environmental considerations form an integral part of many of the Department's R & D projects.

As part of the study leading to Energy Paper 54, consideration was given to the additional benefits of these technologies if restrictions on CO_2 emissions were necessary. However, the results were not quantified. The current United Kingdom work in support of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group on "Response Strategies" should improve our analysis of the cost and benefits in regard to climate change for many of the technologies listed.

Fusion

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the likely cost of electricity produced from fusion sources.

Mr. Michael Spicer: At present, work on fusion is still at the stage of establishing whether fusion is a scientifically feasible source of power. It is too soon to make any reliable estimate of the likely cost of electricity from fusion sources.

Offshore Wind Generation

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether his Department has any plans to fund the setting up of a pilot programme of offshore wind generation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The chairman of the CEGB announced in 1988 the proposal to build an offshore wind turbine generator as part of a joint programme with the Department. Following withdrawal of the prospective industrial partner from wind turbine manufacture, alternatives are now being considered.

Non-fossil Fuel Sources

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the amount of public sector support given directly or indirectly since 1979 to each non-fossil fuel source of power including all forms of renewable energy.

Mr. Parkinson: Expenditure since 1979 by the Department of Energy on its renewables programme and payments made to the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) in support of its nuclear energy programme are set out in the tables. Other public sector contributions towards the renewables programmes in which the Department is involved are mainly from the Central Electricity Generating Board, together with other parts of the electricity supply industry, the Science and Engineering Research Council and the Natural Environment Research Council. Other public sector contributions to the UKAEA's nuclear energy programme are from the Department of the Environment, British Nuclear Fuels, the electricity supply industry and NIREX. Figures for these other public sector contributions are not readily available over the period and could not be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Department of Energy research, development and design expenditure on renewable energy (£ million)

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Wind	0·6	0·8	0·9	2·5	2·5	4·8	5·4	3·7	4·0	3·9
Wave	3·0	3·3	4·4	3·1	1·0	0·4	0·4	0·1	0·2	0·1
Geothermal aquifers	1·3	1·7	2·6	1·5	1·8	1·1	0·3	0·1	0	0·1
Geothermal hot dry rocks	0	0·6	5·6	3·0	2·9	4·6	3·5	3·5	3·6	3·5
Solar	1·2	0·9	0·7	1·4	0·9	0·5	0·7	0·9	1·1	1·4
Biomass[1]	0·1	0·4	0·4	1·2	0·7	1·1	0·8	1·3	2·2	1·5
Tide	0·6	1·4	0·4	0	0	0·3	0·1	0·1	1·4	1·2
Hydro/General studies									0·8	0·8
Technology transfer and promotion									0·7	1·0
ETSU services	1·4	2·2	2·3	2·0	1·9	2·1	2·0	2·3	2·3	2·5
	8·2	11·3	17·3	14·7	11·7	14·9	13·2	12·0	16·3	16·0

[1] Includes expenditure on "waste as a fuel" projects under the Energy Efficiency Office demonstration scheme.

Note: Up to 1986-87 total for research and development also includes expenditure on low head hydro and general studies. These are separately identified for 1987-88 onwards. For 1987-88 onwards general studies includes work by the chief scientist's group.

Department of Energy expenditure on nuclear programmes (£ million)

	Fast reactor	*Fusion*	*Thermal reactor*	*Other*	*Total*
1979-80	76·4	13·0	17·2	38·9	145·5
1980-81	90·8	14·8	22·8	57·8	186·2
1981-82	98·2	22·5	35·7	49·0	205·4
1982-83	96·4	21·6	36·0	60·8	214·8
1983-84	114·9	22·1	30·5	36·3	203·8
1984-85	102·5	25·6	25·6	32·4	186·1
1985-86	102·0	21·1	29·1	37·4	189·6
1986-87	99·4	18·9	15·6	50·0	183·9
1987-88	75·8	20·8	16·7	59·0	172·3
1988-89	[1]82·5	24·9	17·4	132·0	[1]256·8

[1] Excludes restructuring costs.

Note: All figures are in cash of the day.

Safety Inspectors

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the number of safety inspectors employed by his Department to look after offshore oil safety.

Mr. Parkinson: The number of safety inspectors employed by the Department of Energy to look after offshore oil safety was 41 at 1 July 1989.

Magnox

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the timetable for closing the Central Electricity Generating Board's magnox nuclear power stations will alter as a result of privatisation.

Mr. Parkinson: This is a matter for the CEGB.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest estimate of the cost per kilowatt hour of generating electricity by *(a)* nuclear plant and *(b)* coal-fired power stations.

Mr. Parkinson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) on 15 December 1988 at column *679*.

Electricity Council

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the Electricity Council intends to publish its annual accounts for the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Parkinson: This is a matter for the Electricity Council. I shall ask the chairman of the council to write to the hon. Member.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disabled People

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to change the earnings rule to increase the amount which disabled persons may earn before losing benefits.

Mr. Scott: People receiving sickness benefit, invalidity pension or severe disablement allowance can do work of a therapeutic nature with their doctor's approval without affecting their benefit entitlement, provided that their earnings do not exceed £28·50 per week. This level was last increased in April 1989 and is reviewed annually.

The amount that disabled people can earn without affecting their income support was increased from £4 to £15 per week in April 1988. The same disregard of £15 applies also to housing benefit and will be extended to the community charge benefits. There are no current plans to increase these disregards.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, 11 April, *Official Report*, column *500*, when sections 2, 3, and 8 (ii) of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 will be implemented.

Mr. Scott: We are still in detailed discussions with the local authority associations about section 7; these will be followed by work on the remaining sections.

Fraud (North West)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what has been the rate of successful prosecutions for social security fraud in the North West since the inception of the scheme offering £75 payments to those who supply relevant information to investigating officials;

(2) what was the rate of successful prosecutions for social security fraud in the North West prior to the introduction of the £75 inducement;

(3) when his Department's inducement programme in the North West was introduced.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department does not operate such a scheme.

Community Charge

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to introduce poll tax rebates for those who care for the elderly within the family home.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Community charge rebates may be claimed by all people who are liable for a full personal community charge or for collective community charge contributions, including people who are caring for the elderly within the family home. The amount of rebate will depend upon the claimant's financial resources, personal circumstances and community charge liability.

Food Vouchers

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what powers social fund officers have to make payments by means of food vouchers; and what guidance they have received on the use of such powers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Social fund officers are empowered by section 33(1A) of the Social Security Act 1986 (as amended by the Social Security Act 1988, schedule 3, paragraph 10) to make social fund payments in the form of vouchers.

Guidance on the issue of vouchers is contained in the social fund manual, a copy of which is in the Library.

Leaflets

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total cost of production and distribution of the leaflet entitled, "Our Business Is Service."

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 26 May at columns *749-50*.

Benefit Costs

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the per capita level of spending on social security benefits *(a)* in real terms and *(b)* indexed with 100 as 1979, since 1979.

Mr. Scott: I regret that it is not possible to provide the information requested. There is no reliable precise estimate of the total number of people who receive social security benefits. Many people receive more than one benefit at the same time and detailed records of the numbers of all multiple beneficiaries and the various combinations of benefits held by them is not kept. Information is collected on the numbers in receipt of each individual benefit (table 15.6 of Cm. 615) and some combinations of benefit but it is not sufficiently comprehensive to determine a per capita level of spending.

Caerphilly Local Office

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has on the reasons why 8·5 per cent. of the annual social fund budget for loans and grants was unspent during 1988-89 in the Caerphilly office; and how many applications for loans or grants in that office during the year in question were refused.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: During the financial year 1988-89 the Department's office at Caerphilly made awards which

accounted for 98·6 per cent. of the loans budget allocation, and 91·5 per cent. of the community care grants budget allocation.

The underspend on the community care grants budget occurred because the office had anticipated the need to fund start up grants arising from two local housing developments. In the event, the Wales and West housing association development did not result in any applications and the Newydd housing association development was cancelled.

Information about the number of loan and grant applications which were unsuccessful may be obtained from data in the Library.

Private Residential Care

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will outline the mechanism for ensuring that social security resources currently spent on private residential care and nursing homes are directed towards community care.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Income support remains available both to those in need of the high levels of personal care provided by independent homes and to those in need of care who remain in their own homes.

Community Charge

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether social grant is counted as income for the purpose of calculating poll tax rebate entitlement for the spouse of a student.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Yes.

Giro Cheques

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will instruct the Department of Social Security offices to post giro cheques to claimants on Thursdays to increase the chance of their arriving before post offices close at midday on Saturdays.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Paydays for claimants are allocated evenly across the week to spread the work for the benefit of Post Office and local office staff alike. However, it is not normal practice to issue giro cheques on a Friday for the reason cited in the question.

DEFENCE

Soviet Submarine (Accident)

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when Her Majesty's Government were informed by the Soviet Government of the disabling accident to the nuclear reactor of the Echo-2 class Soviet submarine which occurred on 26 June.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have been asked to reply.

This accident was of such a minor nature that no notification from the Soviet Government was expected and none was received.

Low Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many air-misses involving military aircraft operating in the night low-flying system were reported *(a)* between 10 October 1987 and 31 May 1988 and *(b)* between 10 October 1988 and 31 May 1989.

Mr. Neubert: There were no air miss reports involving military aircraft operating in the night low-flying system for the period 10 October 1987 to 31 May 1988, and one reported for the period 10 October 1988 to 31 May 1989.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the refinements made to the revised night low-flying system with effect from 1 June.

Mr. Neubert: The major refinement made to the revised night low-flying system, with effect from 1 June, was to centralise the co-ordination of the system and the responsibility for deconfliction at the tactical booking cell at RAF West Drayton.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures have been taken since October 1988 to separate rotary and fixed-wing low flying over the United Kingdom *(a)* at night and *(b)* during the day.

Mr. Neubert: As with all aspects of low flying training, flight safety is under continuous review. Since October 1988, greater separation of rotary and fixed-wing low flying at night has been achieved through the designation of specified geographical areas for either predominantly fixed-wing or predominantly rotary-wing activity. No additional measures to separate fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft during daytime operations have been considered necessary since October 1988.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which units were responsible for *(a)* co-ordination of the night low-flying system and *(b)* deconfliction in the night low-flying system prior to the introduction of the revised system on 1 June.

Mr. Neubert: Co-ordination and deconfliction of night low flying during the trial period, to the introducion of the revised night low flying system on 1 June, were the responsibility of HQ strike command, RAF Germany and HQ 3rd air force.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of low-flying sorties over the United Kingdom in each year since 1979 by United States air force aircraft, providing a breakdown of the figures by aircraft type.

Mr. Neubert: Central records are not held in a form which would allow the data requested to be provided.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the scope and purpose of the additional low-flying activity in the Wash area at weekends between 6 May and 25 June.

Mr. Neubert: The only unusual military low flying activity identified in the general area of the Wash over the period in question was of Hercules transit activity on 3-4 June associated with exercise Blue Lanyard, about which those hon. Members, whose constituents were likely to be affected were notified in advance in the customary manner.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the figure for the proportion of RAF Germany low-flying training in 1988 which made use of the United Kingdom low-flying system, provided in the answer from the hon. Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert) to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy of 10 May, *Official Report*, column *475*, included low-flying sorties by RAF Germany aircraft which originated from and terminated at airfields in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Neubert: Yes.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the differences, in terms of the nature and force of their applicability to military low-flying aireraft, between *(a)* restricted areas for aviation, as shown on Civil Aviation Authority maps, *(b)* prohibited areas for aviation, as shown on Civil Aviation Authority maps, *(c)* provost-marshal prohibited areas, *(d)* provost-marshal restricted areas, *(e)* avoidance areas and transit areas in the United Kingdom low flying system, as shown on the Civil Aviation Authority chart entitled "Chart of United Kingdom Areas of Intense Aerial Activity and Military Low Flying System", and *(f)* military low-flying avoidances in force around individual installations and sites but which are not shown on the Civil Aviation Authority chart entitled "Chart of United Kingdom Areas of Intense Aerial Activity and Military Low Flying System."

Mr. Neubert: All restrictions applying to military low flying aircraft are detailed in United Kingdom military low flying regulations and marked, as appropriate, on military low flying charts. There are no differences in the nature and force of the applicability to military aircraft of the categories of restriction listed.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration is being given to authorising low flying at less than 250ft over the United Kingdom during exercises other than work-up training for exercises in the United States of America and Canada.

Mr. Neubert: Training in tactical training areas consists mainly of work-up training for operational low-flying exercises in the United States and Canada. Occasional continuation training may also be carried out to maintain aircrew skills between such exercises, thereby reducing the quantity of work-up training required. There are no plans to change this.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy on retaining central records of requests from foreign air forces, including the United States air force in the United Kingdom, for authorisation to fly in the United Kingdom low-flying system at less than the normal minimum height; and when this policy was first established.

Mr. Neubert: Records of any formal requests by foreign air forces for authorisation to carry out training in the United Kingdom at less than normal height would be handled in accordance with the normal and long-standing arrangements applicable to public records in the Ministry of Defence.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the approximate proportion of RAF Germany low-flying training in each year between 1979 and 1987 which has made use of the United Kingdom low-flying system.

Mr. Neubert: As my answer to the hon. Member on 11 May 1989 at column *475* made clear, accurate figures are not available prior to 1988. It is assessed, however, that for 1987 the proportion of RAF Germany fixed-wing low level sorties that made use of the United Kingdom low flying system was between 20 per cent. and 30 per cent.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of available flying days in the revised night low-flying system from 1 June are allocated to *(a)* RAF strike command, *(b)* RAF Germany, *(c)* RAF support command, *(d)* the United States air force, *(e)* other NATO air forces and *(f)* other users.

Mr. Neubert: With the recent centralisation of co-ordination of night low flying at the tactical booking cell at RAF West Drayton, the use of the United Kingdom night low flying system is not allocated to commands on a daily basis.

Provost-Marshal Areas

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list all provost-marshal prohibited areas which have been *(a)* established and *(b)* disestablished since 1979, stating the reason for establishment or disestablishment in each case;

(2) if he will list all provost-marshal restricted areas which have been *(a)* established and *(b)* disestablished since 1979, stating the reason for establishment or disestablishment in each case.

Mr. Neubert: It is not our practice to release detailed information about the United Kingdom low flying system.

Hawk Aircraft

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many accidents have occurred involving RAF Hawk aircraft since 1979; and if he will indicate the causes of such accidents where possible.

Mr. Neubert: Details of major accidents to RAF Hawk aircraft since 1979 are as follows:

Date	*Place*	*Accident*	*Category*	*Cause*
1. 17/5/1980	Brighton Seafront	Red Arrows aircraft crashed during display	5	Aircrew error
2. 19/8/1980	Valley Airfield	Tyre burst on landing	4	Not positively determined
3. 28/7/1982	Valley Airfield	Aircraft stalled	5	Aircrew error
4. 20/10/1982	Chivenor	Birdstrike caused loss of power	5	Birdstrike
5. 24/6/1983	Isle of Man	Flew into a ridge	5	Aircrew error
6. 29/7/1983	40 NM SWP Brawdy	Engine surge, failed to relight	5	Not positively determined
7. 29/7/1983	Barnstaple Bay	Mid-air collision (2 Hawks)	5	Aircrew error
8. 21/3/1984	Akrotiri	Hit ground	5	Aircrew error
9. 31/8/1984	Sidmouth, Devon	Engine surge, failed to relight	5	Technical fault

Date	Place	Accident	Category	Cause
10. 25/10/1984	4 NM SW Port Madoc	Control restriction	5	Not positively determined
11. 7/11/1984	Near Mona Airfield	Birdstrike	5	Birdstrike
12. 30/1/1985	Bristol Channel	Reported aileron restriction	5	Not positively determined
13. 17/4/1985	Wattisham Airfield	Canopy came off aircraft	5	Aircrew error
14. 26/9/1985	Decimomannu	Mid-air collision (2 Hawks)	5	Aircrew error
15. 7/7/1986	Valley Airfield	Tyre burst on take off	5	Not positively determined
16. 3/11/1986	Scampton	Engine surge, incorrect relight	5	Aircrew error
17. 16/11/1987	Welton	Mid-air collision (2 Hawks)	5	Aircrew error
18. 22/1/1988	Scampton Airfield	Red Arrows display practice	5	Aircrew error
19. 13/5/1988	½ NM S of Brawdy	Engine failure on take off	5	Servicing error
20. 24/6/1988	Scampton Airfield	Accident on take off	4	Aircrew error
21. 14/6/1989	15 NM SE Llanbeder	Mid-air collision		Under investigation

Notes:
1. Category 4 Damage not repairable on site.
2. Category 5 Aircraft damaged beyond repair.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Hawk training aircraft are operating with the RAF and other air forces; and what design modifications have been made to the aircraft as a result of accidents.

Mr. Neubert: A total of 172 Hawk aircraft have been taken into service by the Royal Air Force. The aircraft has met fully its original design specification. As with all aircraft, modifications are introduced from time to time in the light of operational experience. The number of Hawk aircraft operational with other air forces is not a matter for my Department.

Cardigan Bay (Accident)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is now in a position to publish in the *Official Report* details of the military aircraft accident which occurred on 14 June over the Cardigan bay area.

Mr. Neubert: On the afternoon of 14 June, while engaged on a training flight under instruction and practising a formation rejoin at 10,000 feet, two RAF Hawk aircraft from RAF Valley collided some 15 miles south-east of Llanbeder. One pilot, a Royal Navy officer, ejected successfully. Unfortunately, the pilot of the second aircraft—a Royal Air Force officer—did not eject and was killed. Wreckage fell on two sites about eight miles apart. A board of inquiry was convened in the normal way. A summary of the results of the inquiry will be published in due course.

Smoking

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the figures for smoking prevalence in the armed forces; if he will estimate the number and type of smoking-related diseases prevalent in the armed forces as a result of these smoking rates; what plans he has to reduce the incidence of smoking in the armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: There are presently no current figures available for smoking prevalences in the armed forces. A recent survey into the health of service men, once analysed, will provide a comparison of smoking rates within the services at home and abroad. A British regional heart survey in 1981 produced the following statistics on smoking incidence in the armed forces: Never smoked 12 per cent, Ex-smokers 30 per cent., Current smokers 58 per cent. Service statistics on illness and causation are not kept in a manner which would enable a true identification of smoke-related illness. The Ministry of Defence is ever aware of the need to reduce cigarette smoking by service men and has a continuing health education campaign aimed at all ranks and levels.

Nuclear Submarines (Decommissioned Reactors)

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where the decommissioned pressurised water reactors removed from British nuclear submarines are stored; and what is the method of that storage.

Mr. Sainsbury: Only one nuclear-powered submarine Dreadnought, has so far been decommissioned. The defuelled reactor belonging to this vessel is inside the reactor compartment which remains an integral part of the submarine. Dreadnought has been berthed at Rosyth naval base since 1983.

HMS Southampton

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he hopes to announce the contract for the refit of HMS Southampton.

Mr. Sainsbury: Shortly.

Defence Land

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the total area of defence lands in 1979 and to date; and what plans he has to *(a)* release more, or *(b)* acquire further such lands.

Mr. Neubert: On 1 April 1979 the total freehold and leasehold land and foreshore held by the Ministry of Defence was 621,118 acres (251,358 ha). The equivalent figure on 1 April 1989 was 596,265 acres (241,300 ha); some 79 per cent. of this consists of ranges, training areas and airfields.

The MOD continues to keep the size of its estate under review. Land which is surplus to defence requirements is disposed of; receipts from the sale of land and buildings were £150 million in 1988-89, nearly double that of any previous year.

There remains, however, a shortage of training land for the Army and additional areas are being acquired when they become available.

SCOTLAND

Community Charge

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the information on how many people in Scotland have and have not paid the poll tax to be available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It will be some while yet before reliable information becomes available from local authorities on payment levels of the community charge. Such information as is available from local authorities is not a reliable guide to the numbers of people who are declining to pay, because it cannot as yet take account of those who, for example, have decided to pay by lump sum, who may still be awaiting rebated bills or who have decided to delay their first payment until the last moment before they become liable to pay the full annual amount. Local authorities recognise these factors and are, I understand, generally satisfied with the progress so far made in collecting the community charge.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance has been given to Scottish members of Her Majesty's forces living in Germany about requirements to pay the community charge in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Guidance prepared by the Ministry of Defence on all aspects of the community charge as it affects service personnel has been issued to all units and commands at home and overseas. Copies of this guidance have been placed in the House of Commons Library.

River Pollution

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the level of nitrate pollution in each of Scotland's river purification board areas.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested on levels of nitrate pollution in Scotland is not held centrally. Individual river purification boards will have information on nitrate levels in their areas; a number of boards publish this in summary form in their annual reports which are available in the Library.

Warrant Sales

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many warrant sales were granted each year from 1979 in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The numbers of warrants of sale and reports of warrant sales from 1979 to 1987 (the latest year for which figures are available) are set out in the table below.

	Warrants to sell	*Reports of sale*
1979	3,838	226
1980	5,829	231
1981	4,634	287
1982	4,886	477
1983	5,195	403
1984	5,644	512
1985	5,916	693
1986	5,836	678
1987	6,927	650

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to abolish warrant sales in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Arrangements for the enforcement of court decrees for debt were recently reformed in the Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987 following a detailed review by the Scottish Law Commission. The Government have no plans at present for further major reform of these arrangements.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many persons have finance companies initiated proceedings against in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information is kept on which finance companies have been successful in getting orders for warrant sales in Scotland since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not collected centrally.

AIDS

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of patients who have died as a result of AIDS-related diseases in 1989, and for each other year for which figures exist.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of AIDS deaths in Scotland reported to the Communicable Diseases (Scotland) Unit in each year for which figures are available are given below.

	Numbers
1984	3
1985	2
1986	6
1987	12
1988	14
1989[1]	14

[1] End of June.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers of patients in Scotland diagnosed as having developed AIDS in 1989, and for each other year for which statistics exist.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of AIDS cases in Scotland reported to the communicable diseases (Scotland) unit in each year for which figures are available are as follows:

	Numbers
1984	3
1985	4
1986	7

	Numbers
1987	25
1988	36
1989[1]	27

[1] End of June.

Hospices

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, *Official Report*, 19 June, column *49*, he will outline the reasons for the delay in answering the hon. Member's letter of 28 March regarding Scottish hospices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The reason was simply the careful consideration that I gave to the hon. Member's letter, to which I have now replied.

Tree Planting

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has evaluated the effect of the withdrawal of tax incentives for the private planting of trees upon the rate of new tree planting.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North on 9 May 1989 (*Official Report*, column *332*).

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of his Department's reforestation programme introduced to help combat the greenhouse effect.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Although forestry policy has not been aimed specifically at combating the greenhouse effect, over the past 10 years nearly 250,000 hectares of land has been afforested in Great Britain.

Labour Statistics

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in respect of Strathclyde *(a)* the average rate of unemployment and the European community average in the last three years and *(b)* the percentage of industrial employment in total employment and the European Community average.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 7 July 1989]:* The figures are as follows:

(a) Unemployment
Annual average percentage

	1986	*1987*	*1988*
Strathclyde region	19·2	18·4	15·8
European Community	10·8	10·4	10·0

(b) Industrial employment
Share of industrial employment in total employment percentage

	1984
Strathclyde region	37·3
European Community	34·3

Note: The figures are not directly comparable as a result of definitional differences.

Shipbuilding and Ship Repair (Redundancies)

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of redundancies in the shipbuilding and ship repair industries in Strathclyde since 1 January 1984.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 7 July 1989]:* There are no comprehensive statistics on redundancies. The number of redundancies involving 10 or more workers confirmed to the Employment Department/Training Agency as having occurred in Strathclyde region in the shipbuilding and shiprepairing industry since 1 January 1984 was 4,221. This figure relates to redundancies confirmed up to 31 May 1989 and figures for 1989 are provisional.

ENVIRONMENT

Atmospheric Pollution

72. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he plans to undertake any joint initiative to further reduce lead in the atmosphere.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At the end of 1985, the maximum amount of lead permitted in petrol was reduced by 0·4 to 0·15 grammes per litre: This produced a 50 per cent. drop in airborne levels. However, lead from petrol still accounts for about 80 per cent. of lead in the air. The Government therefore fully support the move to unleaded petrol. The chancellor's budget incentive has resulted in unleaded petrol being on sale at about 10p per gallon cheaper than leaded fuel. The Government funded a major advertising campaign in April; further promotional initiatives are co-ordinated by the unleaded petrol group which I chair. The measures taken so far have contributed to the rapid uptake of the fuel which now accounts for over 20 per cent. of the market; the average for last year was just 1 per cent.

Community Charge

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is yet able to indicate what the average poll tax for England would be based on 1989-90 local government expenditure; and which local authorities would be above or below that figure.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax.

Illustrative 1989-90 community charges will be published in due course.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether a community charge registration officer asking for telephone numbers on the same form as chargepayers are meant to sign certifying that the information given on the form is complete is operating within the limits of his Department's guidelines.

Mr. Gummer: A registration officer may require only such information as is necessary to enable him to compile and maintain the community charges register. In the case of the personal community charge this will usually consist of the names and addresses of adults living in a particular poperty and the dates of birth of those who will become 18 during the lifetime of the register. Information about telephone numbers need not be provided to a registration

officer, and the Department's model form and guidance advise registration officers that if they seek any additional information of this kind they should make it clear that there is no obligation on individuals to provide it, and that no penalty can or will be imposed if they do not.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that *(a)* merchant seamen and *(b)* Royal Navy seamen, who are away from shore for more than six months in a year, are treated equally in respect of liability for the poll tax.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax.

The determination of a person's sole or main residence is a matter for community charges registration officers. I have no reason to believe that registration officers will adopt different criteria in relation to the two groups of people mentioned by the hon. Member.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the leaflets on the business rate and the collective community charge will be available; for what reasons the leaflets on *(a)* poll tax rebates and "You and the Community Charge" and *(b)* "Exemption Students, Second Homes and Appeal" were produced in different styles; and what are the estimated production and distribution costs of (i) the rebate booklet, (ii) "You and the Community Charge" and (iii) the other leaflets referred to above.

Mr. Gummer: As the information which the hon. Member requests is very detailed I am writing to him.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to exempt children on approved full time courses at colleges of further education, and who are not in receipt of any maintenance grant, from the poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 4 July 1989]:* The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax. Most young persons will be liable to the community charge either upon reaching their 18th birthday or at the date on which their parents are no longer entitled to child benefit, whichever is the later. Full time students will pay only 20 per cent. of the charge whilst others on low incomes can claim rebates of up to 80 per cent.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to prevent landlords making an additional charge for poll tax purposes where rates were previously included in rent; what steps he is taking to ensure that appropriate reductions in rent are made when rate revenue ends; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 4 July 1989]:* The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax. Legislation would be neither necessary nor appropriate in this area. The Department will be producing shortly a booklet on the impact between the community charge and rents in the series "You and the Community Charge".

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions his officials have had with the office of the Data Protection Registrar; and what steps he is taking to monitor the information being requested by community charge registration officers as a part of the registration process in England and Wales.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* My officials are in regular contact with the office of the Data Protection Registrar. It is for individual community charges registration officers to ensure that their requests for information are within their statutory powers and that they comply with the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to introduce a community charge concession for those who care for elderly friends or relatives in the community.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer, 6 July 1989]:* No special provisions are necessary. I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 29 June 1989 to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) *Official Report*, column *502.*

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the extent of mischievous registration for community charge in each local authority.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* I understand that the registration process is proceeding in a generally satisfactory manner. A few mischievous responses to registration forms have been reported in the press.

Football Spectators Bill

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Football League clubs have indicated their support for the Football Spectators Bill *[Lords]*; and if he will indicate those doing so in the *Official Report.*

Mr. Moynihan: My consultations on the FSB have been with the Football Association and the Football League, who were represented on my working party on the national membership scheme last year. I have not formally consulted individual League clubs.

River Calder (Pollution)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ask the North West water authority to implement the necessary work to prevent pollution of the River Calder in Burnley from Black Clough.

Mr. Howard: I understand that the North West water authority is considering measures to remedy this pollution. Under the provisions of the Water Act, it will become the responsibility of the National Rivers Authority.

Clifton Marsh Sewage Works

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what the effect would be on bacterial levels in the River Ribble of uprating Clifton Marsh sewage treatment works to include full conventional treatment and disinfection using environmentally benign methods;

(2) If he willprovide estimates of what proportion of sewage pollution experienced by Lytham St. Anne's is due to *(a)* bacterial levels in the River Ribble and *(b)* existing local discharges of sewage.

Mr. Howard: Details of how much of the bacterial content of the bathing waters at Lytham St. Annes

emanates from local discharges or from the river Ribble are not available. I understand that the North West water authority believes that the Ribble is a major influence and that the output from Clifton Marsh sewage treatment works is a major component of the bacteriological levels in the river. They are investigating a number of options for improving the quality of the discharge from Clifton Marsh sewage treatment works, including secondary treatment and disinfection.

Rate Arrears

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the 30 local authorities in England with the largest amounts of rate arrears, with the amounts outstanding and the number of people owing in each case.

Mr. Gummer: The latest information from CIPFA published statistics on gross rate arrears, including non-domestic rate arrears, show that the 30 local authorities in England with the largest amounts of rate arrears are as below. Information about the number of people and businesses owning rates is not available.

Gross arrears outstanding

	£1000
Lambeth	[3]33,263
Liverpool	25,230
Brent	16,661
Southwark	[3]13,856
Camden	13,085
Newham	[3]11,284
Manchester	[3]10,702
Westminster	9,816
Hackney	[1]9,559
Birmingham	8,490
City of London	7,828
Lewisham	7,419
Ealing	7,242
Leicester	6,796
Tower Hamlets	5,443
Waltham Forest	[2]5,410
Wandsworth	5,390
Bristol	5,315
Islington	5,185
Hammersmith and Fulham	[2]5,031
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	4,943
Greenwich	4,544
Haringey	4,323
Barnet	[1]4,007
Wirral	3,856
Kensington and Chelsea	[1]3,756
Doncaster	3,743
Harrow	[1]3,704
Wolverhampton	3,301
Sefton	2,947

Notes: Gross arrears are at 31 March 1988 unless otherwise indicated:

[1] As at 31 March 1987.
[2] As at 31 March 1986.
[3] As at 31 March 1985.

Inspectorate of Pollution

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact on dealing with emergencies of the regionalisation of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The inspectorate has no general responsibility for dealing with emergencies. However, one of the objectives of the proposed reorganisation is to increase the effectiveness of the inspectorate across the whole range of its activities, which includes for example the control of emissions from scheduled processes and discharges from premises subject to the Radioactive Substances Act 1960.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's responsibility for dealing with the consequences in the United Kingdom of overseas nuclear accidents remains as set out in the Department of the Environment publication "The National Response Plan and Radioactive Incident Monitoring Network (RIMNET)—a Statement of Proposals", a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what impact his proposed structural changes to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will have on the county of Cleveland; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what impact the regionalisation of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will have on the county of Cleveland; by what extent field work will be reduced as a result of increased travelling; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Cleveland will be the responsibility of the Northern region of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, based in Leeds. The detailed working arrangements that are being drawn up for each region are being designed to facilitate the integration of pollution control, and thus increase the effectiveness of the inspectorate.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proposals he has to place Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on a regional basis; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what structural changes he proposes to make to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Proposals are being developed for the reorganisation of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in order to integrate its responsibilities for air pollution control, radioactive substances, water pollution and other wastes on a regional basis.

Three regions are being established to cover the North, South West and South East. This approach was adopted to ensure sufficiently large management units to secure an adequate mix of skills.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future policy of the Government with regard to toxic waste incinerators.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Incineration will continue to play an important role in United Kingdom waste disposal arrangements. It is the only safe disposal route for some toxic wastes and it can reduce the volume and toxicity of many other wastes thus helping to conserve landfill capacity.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his best estimate of the species of mammals and birds most at threat from the dumping of toxic waste in the North sea.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Present levels of toxic waste entering the North sea do not represent a general threat to sea birds or marine mammals resident in United Kingdom waters. Moreover, as a result of important measures agreed at the second North sea conference in 1987 levels of toxic substances discharged to the North sea will fall substantially.

Persistent organic contaminants, including PCBs and pesticides, can accumulate in the blubber of marine animals which are at the top of the food chain. They have been implicated in damage to local populations of marine mammals in parts of the Wadden sea off the German and Dutch coasts. It has been shown that the heavy load of contaminants in this area comes largely from the Rivers Rhine, Weser and Elbe.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his priority to seek to ensure that each county authority has a toxic waste disposal facility capable of meeting the requirements of indigenous industries in each county.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. Waste disposal authorities have a responsibility to ensure that there are adequate safe disposal facilities for all waste arising in their areas, but they are not precluded from making agreements with other authorities. They are required to submit plans to my hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment showing that satisfactory arrangements are in place or in prospect.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to tighten up and enforce existing regulations governing the disposal of toxic and other dangerous waste substances so as to safeguard the public from the effects of unsupervised disposals of these substances.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Stringent controls over the disposal of waste already exist. Waste disposal authorities (WDAs) are responsible for supervising disposal and safeguarding public health and the environment. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution monitor the performance of WDAs and aim by reports and advice to secure improvements. Legislation to strengthen and enhance existing controls is to be introduced at the earliest opportunity.

Bristol Channel (Pollution)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reports he has received and what reporting system is in the use from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, in relation to pollution by sewage of beaches along the coastlines of the Bristol channel.

Mr. Howard: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution does not report on bathing water quality or beach pollution. Water authorities report to the Department of the Environment on the quality of bathing waters under the terms of the EC Bathing Water Directive and local authorities are responsible for dealing with the pollution of beaches.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the water pollution inspectorate last reported on the water quality in the Bristol channel and the degree of sewage deposits on the beaches; when the inspectorate will next make such a report, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave him earlier today.

Radio 1 Green Week

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the "green week" held by Radio 1, beginning 26 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None.

Nature Reserves

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement concerning the proposed sell-off of national nature reserves.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. and learned Member to the statement made by my noble Friend the Minister of State for Housing, Environment and the Countryside on 3 May in another place.

Cacti

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why his Department, to avoid the risk of rabies being introduced, requires a prospective importer of a cactus plant to notify the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of his intention.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The requirement to consult the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food about rabies controls applies only to imports of live animals. I will ensure that this is made clear in the Department's standard letter acknowledging applications for import permits.

Possession Orders

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the latest available figures on the number of possession orders awarded to building societies and banks against mortgage holders during 1988 and the first two months of 1989.

Mr. Trippier: The number of possession orders awarded in England and Wales during 1988 against holders of private sector mortgages was 43,108. The figures do not distinguish between building societies, banks and other private mortgage lenders. The provisional figures for the first two months of 1989 are 3,819 during January and 3,564 during February. Most possession orders do not result in properties being taken into possession.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the likely impact of the rise in interest rates on the number of mortgaged properties that will be taken into possession or where possession will be granted during 1989.

Mr. Trippier: Evidence available for the United Kingdom in the last decade does not indicate any simple

correlation between changes in the number of mortgaged properties taken into possession and changes in interest rates.

Defective Houses

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will waive the age limitation on defective timber framed houses purchased by residents under the right-to-buy legislation from Ashford council in Kent so that they can be designated as defective under the Housing Act 1985.

Mr. Trippier: There are no age limitations on the types of houses which can be designated as inherently defective under the housing defects legislation. Proposals to remove the current age limits under the home improvement grant system are contained in the Local Government and Housing Bill.

Land, Dorset

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report*, for each of the last three years, details of all sites in Dorset, on the register of public unused and underutilised land, stating the ownership thereof, and the number of acres of each site.

Mr. Trippier: I am arranging for copies of tables giving this information in the most convenient form available to be placed in the Library of the House. Details of sites removed from the register are based on information provided by 30 June 1989.

Endangered Species

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether products made from the skin of the Nile crocodile require an import licence under CITES.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes.

Emergencies

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether expenditure incurred by a local authority in dealing with a major emergency, for which the Secretary of State provides discretionary financial assistance under the Local Government and Housing Bill, will be immune from grant penalties.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no grant penalties under the new local government finance system.

Environmental Impact Assessment Seminar

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department will be represented at the 10th international seminar on environmental impact assessment to be held in Aberdeen during July.

Mr. Chope: No.

National Park Quarries

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact of the construction of de-sulphurisation plants at power stations on the demand for limestone from quarries in national parks.

Mr. Trippier: No assessment has been made of the demand for limestone from quarries in national parks arising specifically out of the the CEGB's flue gas de-sulphurisation programme, although my Department has commissioned a research project into high purity limestone resources and the demand for non aggregate uses. The report will be published at the beginning of next year.

The CEGB has indicated that the complete 12 GW retrofit programme would account for less than 2 million tonnes of limestone per year (less than 2 per cent. of current production). The board also announced in August 1987 that it would not take limestone from quarries in national parks for the three existing power stations selected for retro-fitting with the flue gas de-sulphurisation process. The board went on to state that it hoped to follow a similar policy when obtaining limestone for new stations. That assessment was made in the knowledge of the Government's policy on mineral working in national parks set out in the statement by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West on 9 April 1987 (HC 393/394). I understand that the board's policy towards limestone supply has not changed since their August 1987 announcement.

Returnable Glass Bottles

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made on the implementation of directive 339-185.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

Good progress is being made under the United Kingdom's programme for implementing the Beverage Containers Directive. For glass, we are on course to achieve the target of doubling the number of bottle banks to 5,000 by 1992, and the volume of glass being recovered is increasing rapidly: 275,000 tonnes were recycled in 1988. The amount of metal recovered from cans is also increasing and will be boosted still further by the Aluminium Can Recycling Association's recent launch of a nationwide scheme with 250 collection centres. British Steel is encouraging local authorities to become involved in extracting steel cans from household waste and about 900 million cans are now being recovered annually in this way. For plastic containers, both the British Plastics Federation and the British Soft Drinks Association are supporting recycling schemes and are actively participating in the Sheffield Recycling City experiment involving door-to-door collection and separate plastics bottle banks.

Packaging

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research he has commissioned into the environmental benefits of bio-degradable packaging and shopping bags.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* None. The plastics industry is continuing to develop bio-degradable plastics. We expect manufacturers and users of packaging to take advantage of such developments in responding to the demands of consumers.

Regent's Park

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the acreage of land leased with St. John's lodge to which the public do not have free access; what was the equivalent acreage in 1979; and whether any changes have been requested by the current lesses.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* St. John's lodge with its associated buildings and private gardens occupy approximately 2¼ acres and are owned by the Crown Estate. That position has not changed since 1979. The Government have agreed with the Crown Estate that the present access route from the Inner Circle to the gardens behind the lodge will be closed to the public and a new public access route provided further to the east. This will not affect the area of Regent's park to which the public are admitted.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total land acreage of Regent's park to which the public have free access and what was the equivalent figure in 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* The public have free access to approximately 253 of the 358 acres of Regent's park.

The figures have not changed since 1979.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the total income from Regent's park in the way of leases, concessions, franchises and charges, respectively in 1978-79 and each successive year;

(2) what was the total spending by his Department on Regent's park in 1978-79 and each succeeding year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* Detailed income and expenditure figures for individual Royal parks are available only from 1987-88. The figures for Regent's park are as follows:

	1987-88 £	*1988-89 (provisional)* £
Total Expenditure	1,884,902	2,027,222
Total Income	137,485	144,631

These figures exclude some items of income and expenditure, such as the costs of policing the Royal parks, which are recorded centrally.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when London zoo first asked to be allowed to take over a further 10 acres of Regent's park;

(2) whether any users of Regent's park have been consulted about the use of an extra 10 acres of the park by London zoo;

(3) what considerations his Department will use in assessing which 10 acres of Regent's park can be taken over by London zoo.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* The suggestion that the Zoological Society of London should take over an extra ten acres of land under the terms of the Crown Estate Act 1961, arose in considering the consultant's report on the scope for improving the zoo's financial performance and led to my right hon. Friend's announcement on 11 May 1988. In agreeing the location of the ten acres we shall be concerned to minimise the impact on the park and to protect the historic landscape as far as possible. The Zoological Society of London has consulted local residents and amenity groups on the principle of the 10 acres. As soon as further plans have been developed, the Society will ensure that the views of local individuals and groups are sought again.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any request has been received by his Department to take over part of Regent's park besides the request by London zoo.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* The Crown Estate has asked to take over a piece of parkland of approximately 50 square metres on the edge of the Outer Circle near Hanover Gate Lodge. This will allow access to six villas being built by the Crown Estate on land that it owns. In exchange, the Crown Estate is making available for park use a small section of garden of similar size next to Chalbert Gate footbridge. This will improve the presentation of that area. There will be no loss of public amenity.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any request has been received to block any path, entrance or route within the outer circle of Regent's park.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer, 6 July 1989]:* No such request has been received. London zoo's proposals to use an additional ten acres of Regent's park currently include an extension of the southern boundary of the zoo. This would require the rerouting of the existing footpath outside that boundary along the new perimeter line.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has any plans to charge for access to any part of Regent's park to which the public have free access at present.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* No.

Severe Mental Impairment

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to the joint Department of Health/Department of the Environment working party to consider development in the assessment of severe mental impairment.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 7 July 1989]:* There is, and will continue to be, close liaison between my Department and the Department of Health on this matter.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Electricity Privatisation

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the cost to date of advertising by his Department on the privatisation of the electricity supply industry; and what is the estimated total cost.

Mr. Viggers: Nothing to date—as expenditure on advertising is not likely to be incurred until well into the privatisation process, no estimate of the cost has yet been made.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated cost of the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: It is not possible to say at this stage since advisers have not yet been appointed.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the predicted number of consultants who will be required to assist in the development of proposals for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Viggers: It is expected that consultants will be required to advise on financial, legal, technical and accounting matters.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the salary for the position of the financial adviser to assist in the development of proposals for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Viggers: The fees will be negotiated at the time of appointment.

Students

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current number of *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time students in Northern Ireland; and what are the projections for these figures for the next 10 years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* Figures for enrolment on higher education undergraduate and postgraduate, and vocational further education courses in 1988-89 are as follows:

Full-time	*Part-time*
32,734	48,239

In addition, there are an estimated 80,000 part-time enrolments on continuing education and non-vocational further education courses.

Projections for these figures for the next 10 years are not available.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of people who applied for educational maintenance allowances in each of the last seven years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* The figures for 1982-83 are not readily available, but the applications for educational maintenance allowances in Northern Ireland for the succeeding six years are as follows:

	Number
1983-84	5,973
1984-85	5,219
1985-86	4,420
1986-87	3,599
1987-88	3,206
1988-89	2,446

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from the Fair Employment Agency regarding the White Paper, "Top-up Loans for Students"; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* The agency wrote to me on 13 March expressing concern that the partial substitution of loans for grants could discourage poorer people from entering university, and could therefore have the effect of diminishing Catholic participation in higher education. In noting the agency's view, I remain convinced that its fears are misplaced. In any event, as already indicated in the White Paper, the Government intends to monitor the introduction of the new funding arrangements, so as to measure their effects on such matters as participation by social class or gender.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what would be the cost at 1988-89 prices of introducing educational maintenance allowances for 16 and 17-year-olds in full-time education in schools and colleges at *(a)* the same rates as income support for young people and *(b)* the same rate as training allowances paid to 16 and 17-year-olds on YTP schemes.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* The estimated costs would be *(a)* £22 million and *(b)* £31 million.

Veterinary Services

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he estimates that officials from the Department of Agriculture (Northern Ireland) will complete their considerations regarding the future needs on veterinary manpower and training in the light of the Riley report of 1989.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* The Government announced on 7 June 1989 a review of veterinary manpower needs in both the public and private sectors. The review will be conducted by a committee under the chairmanship of Dr. E. S. Page. The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland will be contributing as required to the committee's work, which it is hoped will be completed by the end of the year.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Short Money

67. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has received about the amount paid in assistance to Opposition parties.

Mr. Wakeham: Since 21 June 1988, when the House approved the existing arrangements for payment of financial assistance to Opposition parties, I have corresponded with a right hon. Member and an hon. Member from the party opposite on two separate matters and answered two parliamentary questions.

69. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Lord President of the Council by what percentage assistance to Opposition parties increased in the last year for which figures are available; and to what amount.

Mr. Wakeham: In accordance with the Resolution of the House of 21 June 1988, the amount of Short money

paid to Opposition parties in 1988 was £1,203,322·97p, which includes arrears of £319,000 due in 1987. The amount paid in 1987, in accordance with the previous Resolution, was £597,741·27p. This represents a percentage increase of 101·3 per cent. between the calendar years 1987 and 1988. However, because of the change in basis of calculation of Short money, this comparison is of limited value.

71. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Lord President of the Council by how much assistance to Opposition parties increased in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer earlier today to the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington). The amount paid increased by £605,581·70.

Questions

70. **Mr. Winnick** To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he proposes to make any changes in the question rota for the next Session of Parliament.

Mr. Wakeham: I have no such plans at present.

European Legislation

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Lord President of the Council what progress he has made in his review of the consideration of European legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: I am still considering the issues involved, taking account of the views of the Procedure and European Legislation Committees.

TRANSPORT

Disabled People (Mobility)

10. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures his Department has taken to increase mobility for people with disabilities.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The many measures that we have taken and our plans for the future are set out in "Transport and Disability, a Statement of Aims and Priorities" recently published by the Department. Copies have been placed in the Library. Drawing on the expert advice of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, Britain is a world leader in improving mobility for disabled people.

British Rail (Privatisation)

13. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has now formulated a timetable for the privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: No decision has been taken on privatisation. My right hon. Friend has made it clear that privatisation could not take place during the current Parliament, although the necessary studies are already in hand.

21. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about proposals to privatise British Rail.

51. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about proposals to privatise British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: A small number from interested organisations and from individuals.

44. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had concerning the possible privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: The work which is currently being undertaken on the possible privatisation of British Rail has been discussed fully with British Rail. In addition a small number of representations has so far been received from interested organisations. My right hon. Friend expects to consult widely in due course if a decision is made to privatise.

Rail Services

16. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has had from the Better Rail Campaign for improved services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, met representatives of NUR, ASLEF and TSSA after the NERA report was published last year. Since then we have received about 700 representations from hon. Members and members of the public.

Road Traffic

17. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he plans to take steps to slow the increase of motor traffic on roads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. It would be neither proper nor popular to try to stifle economic growth or to deny more ordinary people the freedom that car use brings.

We encourage the movement of freight by rail where there are clear environmental reasons. Investment in public transport is rising to record levels.

We do much to promote measures to reduce vehicle speeds and improve the environment in residential areas.

Better driving, management and maintenance could save some 20 per cent. of fuel and significantly reduce pollution.

With a 20 per cent. reduction in fuel usage, pollution levels would be no more than they were 10 years ago.

Automatic Ticket Barriers

18. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many personal and property injuries have been reported from automatic ticket barriers in the past six months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: No major injuries were sustained by passengers using automatic ticket barriers, though 31 minor personal injuries were reported. I understand that there were 99 cases of damage to property.

29. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on automatic ticket barriers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: In addition to five early-day motions, just over 100 representations have been received from Members of Parliament and members of the public since 1 January 1989.

32. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any proposals to ensure the

travelling public have a choice between using an automatic ticket barrier or presenting their ticket to a member of staff.

Mr. Portillo: It is a matter for the operator concerned. London Underground stations with automatic gates have a separate manually-operated gate, under the control of uniformed staff, for use by passengers with physical disabilities or who are laden with bulky shopping or with pushchairs or small children.

Air Fares

19. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the EEC counterparts to discuss European air fares; and if he will make a statement on competition between European airlines.

Mr. Channon: I understand that the French Presidency plans to hold a meeting of EC Transport Ministers on aviation issues in the autumn.

We shall be pressing for further liberalisation, which by increasing competition will lead to lower fares.

National Bus Company

20. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what clawback provisions in relation to which assets at which locations were set out in contracts for the sale of National Bus Company subsidiaries to successful bidders.

Mr. Portillo: Mortgage charges were placed on 18 properties as part of the sale of 14 National Bus Company subsidiaries, so that the National Bus Company receives a share in any development profit if these properties are sold within 10 years.

Air Traffic

22. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the Civil Aviation Authority's policy on air traffic congestion.

Mr. Channon: I have received numerous representations on a variety of air traffic control policy issues.

East London Rail Study

23. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the report on the east London rail study to be published.

Mr. Portillo: I expect to announce the outcome of the ELRS shortly.

45. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the report on the east London rail study to be published.

Mr. Portillo: Shortly.

Luton Airport

24. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what rate of aircraft movements per hour from Luton international airport has been assumed in the study of airspace management in the London area currently being conducted by the Civil Aviation Authority.

Mr. Channon: In paragraph 3.47 of its consultation document "Civil Aviation Policy 548" the Civil Aviation Authority said that it had assumed a peak rate of about 16 aircraft movements per hour for Luton airport.

British Rail (Electrification)

25. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many British Rail electrification projects the Government have approved since 1979.

Mr. Channon: Since 1979 the Government have approved nine electrification schemes, worth over £600 million in current prices. In addition the Government have approved a package of Channel tunnel-related investment including some £35 million of electrification work. British Rail has itself approved a further 14 smaller schemes.

Pedestrians (Casualties)

26. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he proposes to tackle pedestrian road casualties.

Mr. Channon: In 1988 there were at least 1,750 pedestrian deaths on our roads, and 57,000 other injuries. Tackling these unnecessary accidents is one of my top priorities.

I announced a series of proposals in the document "Pedestrian Safety: New Proposals for Making Walking Safer" on 19 April. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of Transport what representation he has had from British Rail regarding private sector involvement in the construction of the Channel tunnel rail links; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The British Railways Board will report to me on its progress in securing private sector involvement in the rail link schemes.

31. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss direct passenger services from the north, north-west, midlands, south-west and Scotland to European destinations using the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I have discussed these matters with British Rail which is still working on the plan which it is producing under section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act.

35. **Mr Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has made any progress with his plans to encourage participation by the private sector in British Rail's high-speed rail link; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail is currently discussing its proposals for the high speed rail link with a number of private sector interests.

48. **Ms. Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss the rail link from the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman regularly to discuss a wide range of issues, including from time to time, the Channel tunnel rail link. Our next meeting is tomorrow.

49. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much Government investment is taking place this year in Nottinghamshire *(a)* on roads and *(b)* on rail.

Mr. Portillo: The Department's planned investment on roads in Nottinghamshire in the year 1989-90 is £14·806 million. This includes new construction, preparation of new schemes, maintenance on trunk roads and motorways and TSG support for county council schemes.

The Government do not invest directly in railways. British Rail cannot provide information on its investment on a county basis.

East London Assessment Study

28. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultation he proposes with people affected by the east London assessment study plans after publication of the consultants' report.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) on 24 April at column *441*.

M1 (Sheffield)

30. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much of the transport supplementary grant has been allocated in 1989-90 for developing the Sheffield M1 link via Mossborough.

Mr. Bottomley: Transport supplementary grant is paid at a flat rate of 50 per cent. on an accepted programme of expenditure for each local highway authority. Expenditure of £1·025 million on the Sheffield—M1 link via Mossborough is part of Sheffield city council's 1989-90 accepted programme.

Road Deaths

33. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people were killed on Britain's roads in 1978 and 1988.

Mr. Bottomley: In 1978, there were 6,831 deaths in road accidents in Great Britain. Provisional figures for 1988 show that 5,041 people died on the roads, a fall of just over one quarter.

In the same period traffic has increased by 40 per cent. and the number of vehicles licensed has increased by 30 per cent.

Routemasters

34. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the implications for central Government financial support of London Regional Transport of the proposed sale of 50 Routemasters to Japan.

Mr. Portillo: Income from the sale of surplus assets by London Regional Transport offsets its need for Government grant.

British Rail

36. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Rail; and what subjects he expects to discuss with him.

Mr. Portillo: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) and the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) earlier today.

Western Environmental Improvement Route

37. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many letters he has received regarding the possible development of the western environmental improvement route; and what was the number in favour and the number against this proposed route.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The large response to the public consultation held earlier this year is being analysed.

A decision on the future of the western environmental improvement route will not be taken until we reach conclusions on the west London assessment study. We intend to announce the outcome of the public consultation.

Public Transport

38. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to prepare for a marked expansion of public transport within conurbations.

Mr. Portillo: The central and east London rail studies are considering proposals for three new rail lines in London as well as a programme to upgrade the existing network. The four London assessment studies are looking at whether public transport improvements might help to solve the problems which those studies are addressing.

The Department is considering a number of light rail projects in urban areas outside London for which grant support is being sought under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968.

London Regional Transport

39. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chair of London Regional Transport; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I met Mr. Wilfred Newton on 3 July. A variety of matters were discussed.

Barnstaple Roads

40. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on the early construction of the Barnstaple downstream bridge and the completion of the bypass around Barnstaple.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend will open the trunk road bypass of Barnstaple on 18 July. Devon county council is entirely responsible for the timing and priority accorded to its schemes for the Barnstaple downstream bridge and stage IV of the urban relief road.

Submarines and Fishing Boats

41. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about incidents involving submarines and fishing boats; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Department has received one representation. It was dealt with by way of ministerial correspondence.

Lane Rentals

42. **Mr. Aspinwall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his assessment of how much lane rental contracts have saved motorists.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: From their introduction in 1984 until March 1988, lane rental contracts on motorways and trunk roads are estimated to have saved about 2,000 days of delay worth £35 million to road users. Results for 1988-89 are not yet available.

Rail Freight (Wales)

43. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has had any recent discussions with the chairman of British Rail about the provision of European freight facilities in south-east Wales.

Mr. Portillo: I have discussed with British Rail its plans for Channel tunnel services.

British Rail is still working on the plan which it is producing under section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act.

Motorway Driving

46. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has conducted research to establish whether there is a form of technology that could be used on motorways as a means of establishing whether a particular driver is driving too close to the vehicle in front.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Existing technology can be used on motorways to help establish whether a particular driver is driving too close to the vehicle in front. It is for the police to decide when it may be appropriate to set up such equipment, and whether it is likely to be effective in persuading drivers to comply with the safe following distances recommended in the highway code.

Some police forces are also experimenting with the use of video camera to bring home to drivers the dangers of following too close.

Drivers should use their eyes, minds and experience.

Roads (Oxfordshire)

47. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been spent by his Department on roads in Oxfordshire over the last five years; and how much he anticipates being spent over the next five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Figures are not readily available in the form requested. In the three years from April 1986 to March 1989 the Department spent £37·8 million in connection with motorway and trunk road new construction and maintenance in Oxfordshire, excluding land costs.

We are planning to spend a further £47·5 million this financial year, mainly on A43 Partree Hill-Wendlebury, A41 Bicester bypass stage 1, and the M40 Waterstock-Wendlebury scheme for which the contract was let on 28 June.

In addition, for the five-year period from April 1985 to March 1990, £3·148 million has been made available to the county council under transport supplementary grant for local road schemes.

Further expenditure will depend upon progress with the scheme and availability of funds.

Transport Investment (Nottinghamshire)

49. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much Government investment is taking place this year in Nottinghamshire *(a)* on roads ad *(b)* on rail.

Mr. Portillo: The Department's planned investment on roads in Nottinghamshire in the year 1989-90 is £14·806 million. This includes new construction, preparation of new schemes, maintenance on trunk roads and motorways and TSG support for county council schemes.

The Government do not invest directly in railways. British Rail cannot provide information on its investment on a county basis.

Trees

50. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many trees were planted by his Department in England in 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: One million four hundred thousand.

Drink-Driving

52. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider introducing a programme to change the attitudes of drunk drivers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We announced proposals to carry out a major experiment in the use of rehabilitation courses designed to influence the attitudes of drunk drivers in the White Paper "The Road User and the Law" published on 7 February this year. In England and Wales, enabling powers will be required for the courts to order rehabilitation for those convicted of drink-drive offences. In Scotland, we are looking into the possibility of setting up a trial scheme employing the existing powers of the courts.

Motorway Safety

53. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for making motorways safer.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In April last year, the Secretary of State announced a package of measures designed to improve the overall level of safety on motorways. Many of these measures were implemented rapidly. Others, involving regulatory procedures or new research are for the longer term.

We are anxious to improve the standard of driving on motorways. We have produced 1¼ million leaflets offering advice on the key safety rules for motorway driving. We

are encouraging newly qualified drivers to take additional tuition on motorway driving after passing the L test and before actually taking to the motorway.

The motorway safety package included measures to improve safety at roadworks. From 1 August last year, speed limits at major motorway roadworks and contraflows were made mandatory and traffic at these sites is being monitored by video equipment. At contraflows, lorries are now normally restricted to the near side lane.

New regulations are currently being prepared which will allow vehicles at the end of a slow moving queue to switch on their hazard warning lights.

The "Lane Closed" gantry signal (flashing red lights) is being replaced so as to display a red cross which will be more readily understood. Similarly, the symbol showing the end of restrictions will be replaced by the word "End". These changes will be implemented progressively, over several years.

A trial of 70 mph speed limit repeater signs on the M1 has been taking place since last September to establish their effect on vehicle speed.

We shall shortly be experimenting with "Chevron markings" to see if they help drivers to keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front.

The Department is also co-operating with some private sector companies to produce road safety publicity material. Amongst recent initiatives is a video recently produced by the Association of British Insurers called "Happens All The Time". This brings home the main lessons on safer motorway driving to 17 to 24-year-olds.

Sprinter Trains

54. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last discussed the supply of Sprinter class trains with the chairman of British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: In April of this year, when I gave approval for a further tranche of class 158 express Sprinter trains.

"New Roads by New Means"

55. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received in response to his consultation document "New Roads by New Means".

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received a number of representations to date, mostly positive. The consultation period does not expire until 14 July.

British Rail (Inadequate Services)

56. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to make British Rail financially accountable to its customers for failed or inadequate services.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail's conditions of carriage already allow for refunds to be considered in cases where timetabled connections cannot be made or where services have been altered, withdrawn or suspended for any reason. I have no present plans for legislation.

Air Traffic Control

57. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to discuss air traffic control delays.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State frequently meets the chairman of the authority to discuss a whole range of topics of mutual interest.

Horne Report

58. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now announce a timetable for introducing legislation to implement the recommendations of the Horne review in connection with public utility undertakings engaging in works on the highway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Detailed proposals for legislation have been prepared following extensive consultation on the Horne report. Comments from interested parties on these proposals are currently being considered.

Legislation will be introduced as soon as there is a suitable opportunity.

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 12 June, *Official Report*, column *334*, to the hon.Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) about the Horne report, what he regards as a suitable opportunity.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The earliest available opportunity.

Pedestrians (Injury Compensation)

59. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will introduce legislation to provide compensation for pedestrians injured by cyclists.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A pedestrian injured by a negligent cyclist can already seek compensation through the courts. Regular cyclists should try to ensure that their normal household insurance policies are extended to cover injury to third parties caused when cycling. This is in fact often the case under such policies anyway.

A1/M1 Link

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to approve tenders for the A1/M1 link Thrapstow-Brampton.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Tenders for the western part of the Thrapston to Brampton section of the M1 to A1 link road (contract 7) are due for return on 4 August. A contract will be awarded when the checking procedures have been carried out.

A41 (Bypass)

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the difference in the approved route as between the first and second inquiry covering the Northchurch to Kings Langley A41 bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The centre line of the Kings Langley and Berkhamsted bypasses was established by orders made under the Highway Act following the first inquiry. Draft amendment orders considered at the second inquiry would, if made, modify that line to the minor extent necessary to reflect the dual carriageway standard and grade separation of the junctions now proposed.

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the second inquiry into the A41 bypass covering

Northchurch to Kings Langley *(a)* opened and *(b)* closed; when the inspector was expected to report; and when it is anticipated he will report.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The second inquiry into draft line, side roads and compulsory purchase orders for the Kings Langley and Berkhamsted bypasses opened on 27 April 1988 and closed on 6 September 1988. The inspector's report was received in March.

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the first inquiry into the A41 bypass covering Northchurch to Kings Langley *(a)* opened and *(b)* closed; and when the inspector reported.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The first inquiry, into the draft line orders for the Kings Langley and Berkhamsted bypasses, opened on 3 February 1983 and closed on 12 May 1983. The inspectors's report is dated 26 September 1983.

M66

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to change the level of the parapet on the Brinnington road and Lingard lane road bridges and the Lapwing lane footbridge over the M66.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The parapets meet the Department's standards applied throughout the country.

Transport Supplementary Grant

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill, of 27 June, *Official Report*, column *376*, if he will state the amount of transport supplementary grant allocated to Liverpool city council for the Park road relief road in 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Expenditure on this scheme accepted for transport supplementary grant was £300,000 in 1988-89 and £2,060,000 in 1989-90. The grant payable on those figures would be £150,000 and £1,030,000 respectively.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his Department's procedures to ensure that funds allocated to a council as transport supplementary grant are spent on the project for which they were intended.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Transport supplementary grant is not a specific grant paid in support of individual projects. It is paid towards the cost of accepted programmes of expenditure on named major schemes and on blocks of minor works expenditure on roads of more than local importance.

If an authority's expenditure on its approved programme in any year is significantly less than the amount accepted for TSG, an adjustment may be made to the grant paid in a subsequent year to ensure that grant is not paid twice on the same piece of planned expenditure.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the inspector's report into toll charges on the Severn bridge; and when he expects to announce his decision on the inspector's recommendations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As soon as possible.

Thames Riverbus Service

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the agreement between his Department and the Thames Riverbus service concerning the payment to the service of a £500,000 grant.

Mr. Portillo: I have arranged for a copy of the agreement to be deposited in the Library of the House.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why the agreement between his Department and the Thames Riverbus service concerning the payment of a £500,000 grant specifies that the service must be maintained to only some of the piers served by the Riverbus at the time the agreement was made.

Mr. Portillo: The provision concerning a service to certain piers was designed to ensure that a substantial core service would be provided so that Riverbus would contribute to the relief of road congestion and encourage the development of riverside areas in need of regeneration. The piers specified for this purpose in the agreement, Charing Cross, Festival, Swan Lane, London Bridge/City and West India, were those serving the core route.

Manchester Airport Rail Link

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the Government's current position about the Manchester airport rail link; what recent contact he has had with British Rail in relation to the project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) earlier today.

Trawlers (Accidents)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents involving fatality have occurred to fishing trawlers which remain unexplained; and what is the number of deaths recorded.

Mr. Portillo: During the last 12 months, Department of Transport marine surveyors have been appointed to investigate all accidents to United Kingdom fishing vessels involving fatalities. In the cases where the investigation is complete, the probable causes have been established.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions accidents involving Royal Navy or United States submarines and fishing trawlers have resulted in fatality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: There have been no known fatal accidents involving United Kingdom registered fishing vessels and United Kingdom or United States submarines.

Underground Fares

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to meet the chairman of London Regional Transport to discuss Underground fares.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of London Regional Transport (LRT) regularly to discuss a range of issues.

FV Fay (Sinking)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the sinking of the FV Fay at 5 am on Thursday 6 July; if there were any British or North Atlantic Treaty Organisation submarines in the area at the time; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Fay was returning home from the Isle of Man after acting as escort boat for a charity event. Some two hours after sailing it was found that the vessel was flooding. A Mayday signal was sent before the boat had to be abandoned. A rescue operation was mounted involving aircraft, helicopters and lifeboats and all hands were picked up.

An investigation is being carried out. At this stage the cause of the sinking is not clear; it does not, however, appear that any other vessel was involved and, in particular, it has been established that no British or other NATO submarines were in the vicinity. The incident took place in waters that are too shallow for dived submarine operations.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 11 July 1989

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police (Initiation Rites)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has of initiation rites in police forces; and what procedures there are for ensuring that young recruits are able to complain to an independent person.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have no evidence that this kind of conduct is widespread but, where it occurred, it would be likely to constitute a disciplinary offence. A police officer who was the victim of such an offence would be expected to bring the matter to the attention of a supervising officer or his Police Federation representative. In addition, every police officer has the right to ask for an interview with HM inspector of constabulary, during the annual inspection of the force, to discuss any grievance over his treatment.

Wandsworth Prison (Staffing)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present position of staffing levels at Wandsworth prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are 445 officers, including principal and senior officers, at Wandsworth compared with 437 at 1 April 1989. The total full and part-time staff at the prison now stands at 584.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department expects to reply to the current year's report by the board of visitors of Wandsworth prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I shall be writing shortly to the chairman to thank him for the 1988 report of the board of visitors. The recommendations of the board are receiving detailed consideration.

West Midlands (Chief Constable)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the chief constable of the West Midlands; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend last met the chief constable on 16 September 1988 in the course of a visit to the West Midlands police force. A range of topics was discussed as is usual in such occasions.

Passport Applications

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passport applications by United Kingdom citizens now remain uncleared.

Mr. Renton: The latest available figures are for the week ended 2 July, when about 500,000 applications remained outstanding, a reduction of over 36,000 from the previous week. Following the settlement of the recent industrial dispute at the passport offices, efforts are being made to reduce the backlog of applications as quickly as possible, and a number of special measures are being taken to ease the difficulties facing the travelling public. These were described in the reply given by my right hon. Friend to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 4 July, at columns 99-100.

Nazi War Crimes

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the report he has now received regarding allegations of Nazi war crimes committed by those now resident in the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: I would refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on 27 June 1989 at column 399.

Section 11 Money

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much section 11 money has been made available to *(a)* local education authorities and *(b)* other bodies; and for what purposes in the past year, five, 10 and 15 years ago, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The amount of grant paid under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 for 1987-88, the most recent year for which actual expenditure figures are available, and for five, 10 and 15 years previously was as follows:

Year	*Total grant* £	*Education* £	*Other* £
1972-73	7,787,873	5,904,346	1,883,527
1977-78	24,745,627	20,777,102	3,973,525
1982-83	65,817,318	51,342,459	14,474,859
1987-88	72,851,394	55,052,417	17,798,977

The majority of section 11 funded posts involve educational expenditure and are mainly concerned with the teaching of English as a second language. Grant is also paid for posts concerned with bilingual classroom assistance, adult education, youth work, education welfare and home-school liaison.

Other principal users for section 11 apart from education span the range of local authority responsibilities including social services, business development, housing and environmental health, translation and interpretation services. The Government are presently considering the results of the scrutiny report into section 11 funding and will announce its conclusions in due course.

Summer Time

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing the times of sunrise and sunset on the first day of each month in 1992 in *(a)* Dumfries, *(b)* Edinburgh, *(c)* Dundee, *(d)* Aberdeen, *(e)* Inverness, *(f)* Thurso and *(g)* Lerwick, respectively, under (i) the status quo and (ii) single-double summer time as described in his Department's Green Paper on summer time.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is not immediately available. I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Drinking (Public Places)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the safer cities initiative and the ban on drinking in public places.

Mr. John Patten: The experimental byelaw in Stockton-on-Tees, which makes it an offence to drink alcohol in designated public places, came into force on 5 April. The byelaw is in force in five other local authority areas—Bath, Coventry, Restormel (Cornwall), Rushmoor (Hampshire) and Scarborough—and will be in force in Chester shortly. The experiment is due to run for two years and will be closely monitored by participating local authorities, the police and the Home Office. Preliminary results are encouraging. The byelaw has been shown to be popular in most places and public drinking on the streets has largely stopped: the relatively few number of police requests to desist have almost always been heeded. There have been just six prosecutions, three in Bath and three in Coventry. A Home Office crime prevention unit paper containing the results of a survey, of Coventry city centre users, on the byelaw has recently been published. The survey shows that nine out of 10 users of the city centre who were questioned welcomed the introduction of the ban.

The safer cities programme is making good progress. Three projects are fully operational, at Bradford, Nottingham and Wolverhampton. They have already started crime prevention work there, most of it improving physical security but some directed to lessening the fear of crime and to preventing offending by young people. Projects at Lewisham and Birmingham begin this month. Five further projects are due to begin operating by the end of September, and six more by the start of the new year.

Community Radio

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the names of the people and of the stations that have been granted a community radio licence.

Mr. Renton: The incremental local radio scheme is administered by the IBA. To date they have offered franchises to the following:

Name of applicant	*Proposed station name*	*Coverage area*
Clement Mclarty	FTP	Bristol
Ravinder Jain	West London Radio	Hounslow/Ealing/ Southall
Mike Shaft	Sunset Radio	Manchester
Daniel Macleod	Stirling Community Radio	Stirling
Ashok Joshi	Radio Harmony	Coventry
Dr. Zannetos Tofallis	London Greek Radio in association with WNK Radio	Haringey
Stephen Oates	Isle of Wight Radio	Isle of Wight
Alan Fry	Sunderland Community Radio	Sunderland
John Simpson	Belfast Community Radio	Belfast
Pervez Akhtar	Bradford City Radio	Bradford
Lester Cowling	KNBC Radio	Kettering
Charles Turner	KFM Radio	Stockport
Des Shepherd	North East Essex Community Radio	Tendring

Broadcasting

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing *(a)* how many cable franchises have been granted, *(b)* which communities they serve, *(c)* how many cable franchises are switched on, *(d)* which communities they serve, *(e)* the estimated subscribers in each case and *(f)* whether interactive services are provided.

Mr. Renton: I understand from the cable authority that a total of 41 cable franchises have been granted, of which 16 have been licensed by the cable authority, and 11 of which are operational. A further 30 franchises have been advertised by the authority. The granting of a cable franchise has no standing in law. It is simply an indication that the cable authority intends to award a licence under the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984 to the franchise holder provided it meets certain conditions.

Franchises granted but licence not yet awarded

Andover (IVS Enterprises)
Barking, Dagenham, Bexley, Redbridge (East London Telecoms Ltd.)
Barnet, Brent, Hammersmith and Fulham (City Centre Comms Ltd.)
Birmingham and Solihull (Birmingham Cable Ltd.)
Bolton (Bolton Telecable Ltd.)
Bristol, Bath, Weston Super Mare etc. (West Country Cable Ltd.)
Cambridge, Ely, Huntingdon, Newmarket etc. (Cambridge Cable Ltd.)
Cardiff and Penarth (British Cable Services Ltd.)
Chatham, Gravesend, Maidstone etc. (South Estuary Cable Ltd.)
Cheltenham and Gloucester (Cotswold Cable Ltd.)
Crawley, Horley and Gatwick Airport (Mid Downs Cable Ltd.)
Cumbernauld, Kilsyth, Airdale and Coatbridge (Cable North Ltd.)
Dumbarton and the Vale of Leven (Cable North Ltd.)
East Lancashire (East Lancashire Cablevision)
Edinburgh (Cablevision Scotland plc)
Greenwich and Lewisham (South East London Cable Co. Ltd.)
Kingston and Richmond (United Cable Television (London South) plc)
Lambeth and Southwark (Lambeth and Southwark Cable Ltd.)
Merton and Sutton (United Cable Television (London South) plc)
Motherwell, Hamilton, East Kilbride etc. (Cable North Ltd.)
Northampton (Cable Television Ltd.)
Preston, Chorley and Leyland (Lancashire Cable Ltd.)
Reading, Basingstoke, Bracknell etc. (Cable Thames Valley Ltd.)
Southend, Brentwood, Chelmsford etc. (North Estuary Cable Ltd.)

Wandsworth (Wandsworth Cable Ltd.)

Licensed Cable Franchises
*Aberdeen (Aberdeen Cable Services Ltd.)
Belfast (Ulster Cablevision)
*Camden (Cable Camden Ltd.) (pilot scheme only)
*Coventry (Coventry Cable Ltd.)
*Croydon (United Cable Television (London South) plc)
*Ealing (Cabletel Communications Ltd.)
*Glasgow (Clyde Cablevision Ltd.)
*Guildford, West Surrey and East Hants (British Cable Services Ltd.)
Kingston and Chelsea (City Centre Communications)
Luton and South Bedfordshire (Cablevision Bedfordshire Ltd.)
*Newham and Tower Hamlets (East London Telecommunications Ltd.)
*Slough, Windsor, Maidenhead etc. (Windsor Television Ltd.)
Southampton and Eastleigh (Southampton Cable Ltd.)
South Liverpool (Merseyside Cablevision Ltd.)
*Swindon (Swindon Cable Ltd.)
*Westminster (Westminster Cable Co.)
*Operational system

I understand that about 66,000 households are connected to broadband cable systems. The figures for individual cable systems are commercially confidential.

Interactive Services
Windsor Television, Cable Camden and East London Telecommunication offer an alternative telephone service. Westminster Cable offers areas to Prestel and also, for some subscribers, remote access to a videodisc library.

West Midlands Police

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the west midlands as to during which years the following officers served in the west midlands serious crimes squad: Detective Chief Inspector John Moore (retired), Detective Superintendent James Kelly, Detective Superintendent Alan Watson, Detective Sergeant Michael Hornby, Detective Constable Rex Langford, Detective Chief Inspector Roger Ball (retired), former Detective Sergeant Michael French, former Detective Constable John Brand, former Detective Sergeant Roy Bunn, former Detective Sergeant Ray Bennett, former Detective Constable Alan Buxton (retired), former Detective Sergeant David Millichamp, former Detective Constable Thomas Sutcliffe, former Detective Constable Terence Woodwiss and former Detective Sergeant Colin Morris.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that the information is as follows:

Name	*Dates of service with the Serious Crimes Squad*
Detective Chief Inspector (later Detective Superintendent) Moore	1 April 1974 to 9 February 1975 25 December 1979 to 21 November 1982
Detective Superintendent Kelly	13 May 1974 to 9 January 1977
Detective Superintendent Watson	14 October 1974 to 9 January 1977
Detective Sergeant Hornby	14 August 1973 to date
Sergeant Langford	no service with the Squad
Detective Chief Inspector Ball	1 February 1977 to 22 January 1978
Detective Constable French	10 June 1974 to 5 February 1978
Detective Constable Brand	13 May 1974 to 7 May 1984
Detective Sergeant (now Chief Inspector) Bunn	no service with the Squad
Detective Sergeant (now DCI Bennett)	1968 - 1976 1988 to date
Detective Constable Buxton	no service with the Squad
Detective Sergeant (now Superintendent) Millichamp	8 September 1970 to 31 October 1971
Detective Constable Sutcliffe	6 January 1969 to 28 October 1979
Detective Constable Woodwiss	no service with the Squad
Detective Sergeant (now DCI) Morris	no service with the Squad

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the west midlands as to whether Detective Sergeant Brian Morton was in Queen's road police station when the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings were being interviewed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that general records that would show the whereabouts of officers are destroyed after seven years. The information requested is therefore not available.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to his answer of 5 July, if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the west midlands as to which officer involved in the Ronnie Boldon case was also involved in the questioning of those later convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 5 July, if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the west midlands police force as to which two officers involved in the Derek Gordon case were also involved in the questioning of those convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No, in the absence of any evidence to suggest that there was anything untoward in their involvement in the matters referred to.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 5 July, if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the west midlands as to how many complaints have been received against Detective Sergeant Michael Hornby since 1974; what action was taken in 1980 on the one occasion he was disciplined; and what was the nature of the complaint against him.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that the recorded information relating to the earlier years covered by the hon. Member's question is not fully comprehensive and it is not therefore possible to establish the exact number of complaints made against Detective Sergeant Hornby. As discipline records are destroyed after seven years, the other information requested is not available.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 5 July, if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands police for a report as to what reason Police Cadet Adrian Dart gave for his resignation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that Mr. Dart was a probationary constable who resigned from the force in March 1984 and that he is now pursuing a claim for wrongful dismissal. In these circumstances, it would not be right to comment on the circumstances of his resignation.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 5 July, if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands police on the nature of the offences for which Detective Superintendent Kelly was reprimanded.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It would not be right to give details of the offences. I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that they have no bearing on the current allegations of malpractice within the serious crime squad, and that Mr. Kelly was not a member of the squad at the time.

Parole Decisions

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners whose parole eligibility date has passed are awaiting decisions by the parole board on recommendations by the local review committee; and what is the current average time lapse between that date and the decision being made.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Statistics are not readily available in the form requested. For further information, I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) on 4 July 1989 at column 95.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost of keeping prisoners after their parole eligibility date whilst awaiting decisions by the parole board on recommendations by the local review committee.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not possible to distinguish the cost of keeping prisoners eligible for parole from that of other prisoners. The average weekly cost of keeping a prisoner in a penal establishment in 1987-88, the latest period for which information is available, was £275.

National Stud

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to privatise the National Stud; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: No.

Experiments on Animals

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received the second annual report of the Animal Procedures Committee; and when he intends to lay copies of the report before Parliament.

Mr. Hurd: I have laid before Parliament copies of the report, which is published today by HMSO as HC458.

This report reflects the continuing contribution which the Animal Procedures Committee is making towards the effective operation of the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, the protection of animals used in scientific procedures and the debate over how animal procedures should be regulated.

I welcome the report's conclusion that

"this country has an up-to-date and sound legislative framework for regulating and controlling all scientific procedures involving living animals"

and I am grateful to the committee for its work.

THE ARTS

Museum of the Moving Image

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether the museum of the moving image has achieved the targets set out for it at its inception.

Mr. Luce: The Museum of the Moving Image had a target of 435,000 visitors in its first year and this target is expected to be reached by the end of July, two months ahead of schedule. Over 53,000 schoolchildren have visited the museum emphasising its educational appeal.

Libraries

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will state the names of persons and their occupational posts who are to serve on the Library and Information Services Council for England working party on public library objectives, and the terms of reference of this working party.

Mr. Luce: The Library and Information Services Council (England) has appointed the following to serve on its working party on public library objectives:

- Mr. Royston Brown, Management Consultant *(Chairman)*
- Mr. A. R. Blick, Co-ordinator of Information Services, Beecham Group plc
- Mr. R. Bowden, Deputy Chief Executive, the Library Association
- Mr. W. A. Butler, Assistant to the Chief Inspector of Audit, The Audit Commission
- Mr. P. F. Cox, City Librarian, Westminster City Council
- Mr. A. Howson, Director of Libraries and Museums, Falkirk District Council (nominated by the Library and Information Services Council (Scotland))

Mr. D. Leabeater, Senior Research and Development Officer, National Consumer Council
Mr. D. Lindley, Head of Library Services, Books for Students
Dr. R. A. McKee, Chief Librarian and Arts Officer, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Mr. D. Welch, Chief Librarian, South Eastern Education and Library Board, County Down (nominated by the Library and Information Services Council (Northern Ireland))
Mr. W. G. Williams, County Library and Museums Officer, Clwyd County Council (nominated by the Library and Information Services Council (Wales))

The terms of reference are: to examine the present nature of current public library objectives (including unpublished material), and to develop a model set of objectives from which any library authority might select those appropriate to its own circumstances, and which could provide a starting point for the development of exclusive local objectives. The model set of objectives should preferably be in the form of a manual for publication, and the objectives should be capable of performance measurement.

To suggest ways of testing/developing/promoting the model set of objectives.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service Dispersal

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to disperse Civil Service manpower to the South Western region.

Mr. Brooke: As I announced to the House on 9 February 1989, at columns *751-52*, individual departments are reviewing the location of their work with a view to finding locations offering easier labour markets and better value for money, and departmental Ministers will be announcing their decisions.

Exchange Rate (Canada)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the rate of exchange between the United Kingdom and Canada at present; and what it was one year ago.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 5 July 1989]:* At close of business on 5 July the exchange rate was C$2·0570/£ against C$1·9252/£ a year ago.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

LINK Schemes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all LINK schemes so far approved with the expenditure on each and the location of sites at which the research is carried out.

Mr. Forth: To date, 17 LINK programmes have been approved, with total expected expenditure of nearly £245 million. The list gives approved expenditure for each programme.

Project selection under these announced programmes is still at an early stage, but already agreement has been reached with 60 collaborators from industry and the universities; these are also listed.

Participants in Link Projects

Industry
AB Electronic Components
Allied Breweries
Amersham International
Bass
Beaconsfield Instruments Ltd.
Beechams
British Petroleum
British Biotechnology
Campden Food & Drink RA
Chell Instruments
Courtaulds
Cray Instruments & Control
Dalgety-Spillers
Enzymatix
Express Foods
Flour Milling & Breadmaking RA
Foxboro
Ford Motors
Glaxo
Guinness
Heinz
IFTEL Automation
Imperial Chemical Industries
International Biosynthetics
Lyons Bakeries
Lyons-Tetley
Pedigree Petfoods
Pfizer
Phillips
Queensgate Instruments
Quest International
Rank Taylor Hobson
SBP
Schlumberger
Shell
SIFAM
Smiths Industries
Spillers
STC
Tealgate
Thorn-EMI
Whitbread

Science Base
Universities of:
Kent
Warwick
Exeter
Leicester
Surrey
Leeds
Manchester
Hull
Southampton
Strathclyde
Liverpool
Oxford
Nottingham
Bradford
Durham
University of Manchester Institute of Science & Technology.
AFRC (Institute of Grassland & Animal Products).
Food Research Institute.

Link programmes

	Government funding £ million	*Private sector £ million*
Molecular Electronics	10·0	10·0
Advanced Semiconductor materials	12·0	12·0
Industrial Measurement Systems	10·8	10·8
Eukaryotic Genetic Engineering	2·3	2·4
Nanotechnology	7·5	7·5
Biotransformations	2·0	2·0
Personal Communications	6·4	6·4

	Government funding £ million	Private sector £ million
Selective Drug Delivery and Targeting	1·5	1·5
Construction, Maintenance and Refurbishment	1·5	1·5
Food Processing Sciences	7·0	7·0
Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration	1·5	1·5
Optoelectronics	15·0	15·0
Design of High Speed Machinery	10·0	10·0
Structural Composites	20·0	20·0
Biochemical Engineering	7·5	7·5
Protein Engineering	4·8	4·8
New Catalysts and Catalytic processes	2·5	2·5
	122·3	122·4

EEC Telecommunications Initiative

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what is the value of the EEC telecommunications initiative programme; and how much he expects to be spent in Britain;

(2) which regions of the United Kingdom are participating in the EEC telecommunication initiative; and if he will list the projects, with their programme spend value, in each region.

Mr. Atkins: The policy towards telecommunications in Europe adopted by the Council of Ministers is of significant value to the United Kingdom as a major influence on the liberalisation of European telecommunications markets.

If the hon. Member has in mind direct financial receipts, the only EEC telecommunications initiative to provide funding on a regional basis is the Special Telecommunications Action for Regional Development (STAR). Northern Ireland, alone in the United Kingdom, qualifies for support under this programme, and has been allocated 25 mecu—about £16·9 million—of the 780 mecu —about £527 million—total programme funding.

The only other exclusively telecommunications EEC initiative involving the provision of financial assistance is the Research and Development in Advanced Communications Technologies in Europe (RACE) programme of collaborative R and D projects. Total expenditure authorised by the Council of Ministers on the definition and main phases is 571 mecu—about £386 million. Of the 541 mecu allocated so far United Kingdom companies and other bodies may be expected to receive 161 mecu—about £105 million.

Imports

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of the following items sold in Britain in 1988 were imported *(a)* colour television sets, *(b)* electric toasters, *(c)* micro wave cookers, *(d)* goods vehicles, *(e)* cameras, *(f)* personal computers, *(g)* ball point pens, *(h)* pocket combs, *(i)* tooth brushes, *(j)* crockery, *(k)* cutlery and *(l)* saucepans.

Mr. Atkins: The available information is shown in the table.

Imports as a percentage of the United Kingdom market[1]

	Percentage
Colour television sets	39
Micro wave cookers	58
Goods vehicles[2]	40
Ceramic table and kitchenware	20
Cutlery	56
Saucepans	21

[1] For all except goods vehicles, the percentage is calculated as 100* imports/United Kingdom market with the United Kingdom market defined as

United Kingdom Market = Manufacturers' sales plus Imports less Exports

All figures are expressed in current price terms.

[2] Based on United Kingdom registration.

Sources: DTI, SMMT.

Task Force Scheme

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many jobs have been created in each task force area; how many were not funded by temporary employment programmes, including the employment training schemes; how many led to full-time and permanent, longer than one year, employment; how many were in effect self-employment; and how many went to black and ethnic minority groups.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* The information sought about the breakdown of jobs created by task forces is not available in the form requested, nor could it be practically obtained by the task forces. However, the table gives estimates of total anticipated jobs and training places created, and businesses helped directly by projects in each task force since inception.

	Jobs created	Training places created	Businesses assisted
Bristol	307	1,034	572
Coventry	379	1,784	83
Doncaster	536	2,424	1,372
East Birmingham	127	1,319	77
Handsworth, Birmingham	849	1,069	361
Hartlepool	301	2,130	590
Chapeltown/ Harehills, Leeds	111	822	93
Leicester	606	1,148	260
Middlesbrough	432	2,080	60
Moss Side, Manchester	247	3,229	120
North Kensington	820	2,500	85
North Peckham	500	3,600	1,463
Nottingham	308	1,855	269
Preston	655	1,315	483
Rochdale	72	890	810
Spitalfields	232·5	2,140	324
Wolverhampton	408	600	115
TOTAL	6,890·5	29,939	7,137

Separate records on ethnic minority jobs are not kept. However, the evaluation report on the Handsworth task force, prepared by PA Cambridge Economic Consultants —available in the House Library—noted that 69 per cent. of the jobs created by the task force, at the time of writing the report, were taken up by members of ethnic communities (paragraph 7.2.3).

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what criteria have been used to select inner city areas for task force status.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* A range of criteria are used including the levels of local long-term unemployment, other indicators of deprivation and the ethnic minority proportion of the population. Task forces must also be located within the 57 urban priority areas.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the total expenditure on inner city task forces in each year since their inception; how much of that expenditure has been provided from private sources; and how much has gone to national organisations and how much to local community organisations.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* Over £100 million has been committed to task force areas since their inception. The table shows total committed spend on task force projects by calendar year—the figures for 1986 are included in the 1987 total as they were not separately collected. Besides the financial contribution shown in the table, the private sector also provides other assistance such as secondees, advice, loan of premises/equipment etc.

(£'000)

	1986-7	*1988*	[1]*1989*	*Total*
Total spend committed	35,254	53,347	14,103	102,704
Task Force contribution	12,701	20,207	5,632	38,540
Private sector contribution	4,591	9,215	2,336	16,142
Public sector contribution	17,962	23,925	6,135	48,022

[1] To 31 March 1989.

Committed expenditure is counted for the year in which the project has received approval to go ahead, although not all the money may be spent in the same year. We do not keep separate information on how much money has gone to national or local organisations.

Enterprise Initiative

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the total cost of the advertising campaign for the enterprise initiative; and what has been the average cost per take-up.

Mr. Forth: Expenditure on advertising the enterprise initiative since January 1988 has been about £19 million. The enterprise initiative covers a number of schemes and services for firms and there is no single measure of take-up which would justify the calculation of an average cost.

WALES

Radioactive Substances

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many sites in Wales are authorised to discharge radioactive liquid waste to the public sewer.

Mr. Peter Walker: There are currently 55 authorisations under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 to dispose of liquid radioactive waste. The authorisations prescribe discharge into drainage systems which could include public sewers.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those premises in Wales registered under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 being monitored by a commercial company on behalf of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Peter Walker: The following sites are subject to monitoring by a contractor as part of the national environment monitoring programme conducted by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

1. Trawsfynydd nuclear power station, Gwynedd.
2. Wylfa nuclear power station, Gwynedd.
3. Amersham International plc, South Glamorgan.
4. Cilgwyn quarry waste disposal site, Gwynedd.

None of the above sites is subject to registration under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, although the first three are subject to authorisation under the Act.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of premises in Wales registered under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960; and if he will separately distinguish how many are sited in each parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Peter Walker: There are 640 registrations covering Wales under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. Details are not maintained by parliamentary constituency. A list of registrations by county is provided in the DOE/Welsh Office/Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution publication "List of Registrations in England and Wales issued under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 for the keeping and use of radioactive materials and mobile apparatus", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Environmental Audit

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of any premises in Wales currently subjected to an environmental audit by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Peter Walker: There are no premises in Wales currently subjected to an environmental audit by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Training Grants Scheme

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will detail all the submissions from each local education authority for funding of national priority areas under the training grants scheme and the amount of funding allocated for each submission.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The total expenditure to be supported under the local education authority training grants scheme is determined each year by my right hon. Friend. Expenditure under the scheme is divided between national priorities, as specified by my right hon. Friend, and local priorities which are determined by the authorities themselves. Eligible expenditure on training in Wales in 1989-90 will total £13·18 million, of which £5·58 million is expenditure on national priorities and £7·6 million on local priorities. Authorities are free to spend more on in-service teacher training than the amounts specified as eligible for specific grant under the scheme. Allocations are in the main calculated pro rata to the authorities' student population. The allocation of expenditure to each authority for 1989-90 is as follows:

Expenditure to be supported under the Training Grant Scheme in 1989-90
National priorities: £5·58 million—Local priorities: £7·60 million

National priority areas	*Clwyd*	*Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*	*Total*
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
(a) School teachers									
1 Management	82,060	69,270	90,210	47,720	119,890	23,280	78,570	71,000	582,000
2 National curriculum	164,260	138,630	180,580	95,530	239,990	46,600	157,280	142,130	1,165,000
Assistants and Management									
3 National curriculum content	226,300	191,000	248,780	131,610	330,630	64,200	216,670	195,810	1,605,000
4 Religious education	8,800	7,420	9,670	5,150	12,890	5,000	8,450	7,620	65,000
5 Under fives	10,150	11,720	12,750	6,210	23,200	5,000	9,520	9,450	88,000
6 Special Needs Hearing	33,000	6,000	9,000	—	34,000	—	12,000	13,000	107,000
7 Special Needs Sight	5,000	6,000	5,000	2,000	20,000	14,000	3,000	15,000	70,000
8 Special Needs SLD	6,000	—	41,000	5,000	13,000	14,000	15,000	—	94,000
9 Special Needs Des Teaching	11,450	9,650	12,570	6,700	16,750	5,000	10,980	9,900	83,000
10 New Technology	41,450	34,990	45,570	24,110	60,560	11,760	39,690	35,870	294,000
11 Welsh	26,670	38,920	19,600	56,330	30,120	12,750	20,150	18,640	223,000
(b) Further education teachers									
12 AFE	52,430	12,740	73,500	19,110	162,680	—	107,800	61,740	490,000
13 Management	22,790	15,290	24,400	8,970	25,430	6,910	17,930	25,280	147,000
14 Updating etc.	30,070	20,180	32,200	11,830	33,560	9,120	23,670	33,370	194,000
15 Special educational needs	5,580	3,740	5,980	2,200	6,230	1,690	4,390	6,190	36,000
(c) Other									
16 Drugs misuse	13,950	11,450	15,320	7,920	20,550	5,000	13,440	12,370	100,000
17 Youth and community	9,690	7,950	10,640	5,500	14,280	5,000	9,340	8,600	71,000
18 Education psychology	7,000	—	—	—	16,000	—	—	65,000	88,000
Local priority	1,071,600	881,600	1,178,000	608,000	1,580,000	296,400	1,033,600	950,000	7,600,000

Nature Conservation

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any proposals relating to the future organisation of the statutory agencies responsible for nature conservation and the countryside in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has today announced our intention to reorganise the agencies responsible for nature conservation and countryside matters in Great Britain.

Legislation will be brought before the House at the earliest opportunity to give effect to the proposed changes. Responsibilities for nature conservation and countryside matters in Wales are currently undertaken by the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission. These agencies are funded by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. My right hon. Friend and I are agreed that the present functions of those two agencies in Wales should in the future be exercised by a single separate Welsh body appointed by and directly responsible to the Secretary of State for Wales. This new body will incorporate the functional responsibilities of the present offices in Wales of the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission with full executive authority for its work in Wales, compared with the current advisory role of the two committees for Wales. This will give continuity to much of the work now carried out by the existing organisations and will provide valuable expertise for the new body. It also means that decisions affecting Wales will in future be taken in Wales. A single body attuned to the needs of the Principality will be of undoubted benefit to Wales.

The proposals represent a significant change in arrangements and should result in improvements in the efficiency, accountability, and above all the sensitivity of administration for conserving and managing the unique natural assets of Wales. The arrangements should also ensure that full regard is given to the protection of the environment without damage to our natural resources.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

El Salvador

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government support the United States Congress proposal to link aid to El Salvador to respect for human rights.

Mr. Eggar: Respect for human rights is one of several factors that we take into account when determining the level and nature of our bilateral aid to individual countries.

Prime Minister of Pakistan (Visit)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during the forthcoming visit of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Ministers of Her Majesty's Government intend to ask Pakistan to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and to discuss the status of nuclear programme development in the sub-continent.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister raised non-proliferation matters with Ms. Bhutto during her visit.

Karel and Jindriska Korinek

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Czech Government about the detention of Karel and Jindriska Korinek, in a psychiatric hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have been in touch with the Czechoslovak authorities for some time about the Korineks, most recently on 6 July. We will continue to follow the case.

Indonesia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make inquiries of the Government of Indonesia about reports of killings, arrests and reported disappearances in Bacou, East Timor which began on 5 May.

Mr. Eggar: We are aware of these reports. Her Majesty's embassy has not been able to substantiate them.

SCOTLAND

Nature Reserves

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those nature reserves assisted by grant from the Nature Conservancy Council where it has been made a condition of grant that the shooting of birds or other creatures will continue.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment on 4 July 1989.

Scottish Office Activities

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made with the brief, "The Scottish Office and its Activities," issued in June 1988; and whether he still intends to appoint consultants in terms of that brief to raise the profile of the Scottish Office.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on Tuesday 7 March 1989, at column *483*.

Sheriff Courts

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if there are any plans to increase the maximum claim in the small claims procedure in the sheriff court; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The small claims procedure came into operation on 30 November 1988 and I understand that my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has no plans at present to increase the upper financial limit of £750. The operation of the new procedure is being monitored by the central research unit of the Scottish Office and by a research team from the law schools of the universities of Strathclyde and Dundee.

Pearl Fishing

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he has any proposals to issue licences for traditional pearl fishing in Scotland; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has considered proposals to place the freshwater mussel, margaritisera margaritisera, on the schedule of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as a protected species; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am currently considering with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment whether increased protection should be afforded to the freshwater pearl mussel.

Nature Conservation

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the present organisation of the statutory agencies responsible for nature conservation and countryside in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has today announced our intention to reorganise the agencies responsible for nature conservation and countryside matters in Great Britain.

With the growing interest and concern in all aspects of our environment, I am clear that we need a more integrated approach to nature conservation and countryside matters in Scotland. Our scenery, habitats and wildlife —indeed our natural resources as a whole—are priceless assets and they have characteristics which are distinctive to Scotland. We must ensure that we protect and manage them wisely. To achieve this the machinery of Government should be organised effectively and be on a basis that can best take account of Scottish conditions. I consider that the establishment of a single body with responsibility for the natural heritage in Scotland is the right approach. A single agency could take a more comprehensive view of the many issues presently facing us and help to secure our natural heritage, resources and countryside for the benefit of future generations. The experience and expertise of the existing agencies will complement each other in this task, giving an integrated approach to conservation and countryside matters in Scotland.

I propose to create such an agency in two stages. First, as my right hon. Friend has announced, legislation will be brought before the House at the earliest opportunity to establish a separate Nature Conservancy Council in Scotland. The Government will ensure that the new Scottish body is fully equipped to continue to carry out its present duties towards nature conservation. I would then bring forward a Scottish Bill to merge the proposed Scottish Nature Conservancy Council with the Countryside Commission for Scotland to create a single natural heritage body. I would appoint its members and it would report directly to me. The new body will have full executive responsibility for its work in Scotland and be sponsored by my Department. Our proposals represent a significant change from present arrangements. They will result in substantial improvements in the effectiveness, accountability and, most important of all, in the sensitivity of administration in the vital task of conserving and managing Scotland's natural heritage.

I am publishing a consultation paper inviting views on the principles of these proposals. Copies are being placed in the Library. I hope that there will be a large and positive response.

Community Charge

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to ensure that *(a)* merchant seamen and *(b)* Royal Navy seamen, who are away from shore for more than six months in a year, are treated equally in respect of liability for the poll tax.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my hon. Friend the Minister of State gave him on 2 May 1989, *Official Report*, columns *17-18*. Anyone who is dissatisfied with the decision of the registration officer has a right of appeal, first to the registration officer and then to the sheriff.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Loans

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many banks and building societies have indicated that they are willing to administer the student loans scheme.

Mr. Jackson: It is for the individual banks and other financial institutions to reach their own decisions in the light of the detailed negotiations now under way, but it is clear from the discussions that have already taken place that there is substantial interest in participating in the top-up loans scheme.

Planning Courses

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current number of places on planning courses in universities and polytechnics; and what was the number in each of the previous three years.

Mr. Jackson: The numbers of higher education students on planning courses were as follows:

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Universities (GB)[1]: full-time and sandwich students	1,316	979	1,002	1,124
Polytechnics (England)[1]: full-time and sandwich students	2,180	2,090	2,075	2,158
part-time (including evening only) students	951	958	924	1,145

[1] The subject classification for universities was changed between 1984 and 1985.
The figures for universities for 1984 are not therefore directly comparable with those for the later years. The subject classification for polytechnics differs from that for universities. There is therefore incomplete comparability between university and polytechnic figures.

School Premises

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what sanctions the Government intend to use against local authorities and governing bodies which fail to bring their school premises up to the standard required by 1991 in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981;

(2) whether the Government intend to implement fully the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 by insisting that school premises are up to the minimum standard by 1991 as determined by those regulations.

Mr. Butcher: The duty of ensuring that school premises conform to the standards prescribed by the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 rests with local education authorities and governors. Local authorities have been aware since 1981 of the requirements of the regulations.

Immunisation

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to amend the law relating to the statutory school starting age in order to make starting school dependent on certification of completion of a basic child immunisation programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave to him today.

Secondary Education

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimates he has made of the numbers of young people who will be in secondary education in 1990-91 beyond their 18th birthday; what are his estimates of the relevant numbers in *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The Department projects that there will be some 19,600 pupils in English secondary schools in 1990-91 aged 18 or over at the start of the academic year. The corresponding numbers in 1991-92 and 1992-93 are projected to be 18,600 and 17,700 respectively.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in the City of Durham constituency receive severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available in the precise form requested.

The City of Durham constituency is served by the Department's local office in Durham but their boundaries are not conterminous. The numbers of people receiving severe disablement allowance at the Durham local office as at 31 May 1989, the latest date for which the information is available, were 449.

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action. The figure quoted may include a small number of cases not actually in receipt of benefit. Data are provisional and subject to amendment.

Family Credit (Durham)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what number of families are now in receipt of family credit and living in the area covered by Durham department of social security.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At the end of June 1989 the number of families receiving family credit who, at the time their awards were made, were living in the area covered by the Durham local office was 705.

Computerisation

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what safeguards, under the Data Protection Act, will exist to ensure that information will be confidential to Department of Social Security staff only when local Department of Social Security offices are computerised.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department keeps the security of its computer systems under constant review to ensure that

the confidentiality requirements of the Data Protection Act are met. For the computer system now being introduced into local offices, we have strict measures in place to limit access to records to authorised users. It would not be prudent to publish details of those security measures.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what facilities are to be provided for non-English speakers and for those who are unable to communicate by telephone because of physical disability when local Department of Social Security offices are computerised.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Computerisation of the benefit system, and the relocation of work from some London offices, will not affect the way that people communicate with the Department. Interpretation facilities will be available for telephone calls routed to remote sites.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what safeguards will ensure an adequate service to the public should there be serious problems with the operation of new technology in local Department of Social Security offices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Improving service to the public is a key objective in providing new technology for local offices. Safeguards have been built into the development of the computer systems to ensure that an adequate service to the public is maintained.

The computer programmes have undergone rigorous test programmes which include simulated operations in a model office followed by pilot running in 23 local offices. Resilience has been built into the system to reduce the effects of equipment breakdown and contracts have been established with suppliers to ensure rapid response should breakdowns occur.

In the event of a loss of computerisated support by natural disaster or other unavoidable incident, emergency plans are in place to maintain an adequate service to the public using clerical procedures.

One-parent Families

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what form, and when, the ministerial review of policy on one-parent families will be available; and what relation this review bears to the research carried out by his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of lone-parent families has increased from 840,000 in 1979 to just over 1 million in 1986, but their dependence on benefit has increased at an even faster rate. In 1979, 40 per cent. of lone-parent families were dependent on supplementary benefit, but by 1986 the proportion had increased to 60 per cent. No maintenance at all is paid for 77 per cent. of lone parents on income support. In these circumstances the Government must be concerned and examine their own arrangements to see what further can be done to ensure that these fathers meet their responsibilities and to help those lone parents who wish to work to do so.

We have commissioned an independent study of the motivations and perceptions of lone parents on benefit and the results will be fully and carefully considered.

Benefits

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate for each year since 1980 the numbers and proportions of *(a)* council tenants, *(b)* private tenants, *(c)* outright owner occupiers and *(d)* owner occupiers with mortgages in receipt of supplementary benefit, income support or housing benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information available is in the table. Detailed information for owner-occupiers is available only for supplementary benefit. Housing benefit did not begin until 1983-84.

Estimated number of recipients by tenure and proportion of dwellings
A. Supplementary Benefit (1985 data not available)

	Council Tenants		Private Tenants		Owned Outright		With Mortgage	
	Numbers (000)	Per cent.	Numbers (000)	Per cent.	Numbers (000)	Per cent.	Numbers (000)	Per cent.
1980	1,513	23	460	17	330	3	134	1
1981	1,764	27	535	21	348	3	196	2
1982	1,980	31	574	23	388	3	237	2
1983	1,952	32	548	22	424	3	243	2
1984	2,053	34	589	25	442	3	278	2
1986	2,206	37	625	27	437	3	357	3
1987	2,247	39	664	30	418	3	336	2

B. Income support (1988-89 only)

	Council tenants		Private tenants		Owner occupier	
	Numbers (000)	Per cent.	Numbers (000)	Per cent.	Numbers (000)	Per cent.
1988	1,850	33	540	25	655	4

C. Housing benefit (from 1983-84 only)

	Council tenants		Private tenants		Owner occupier	
	Numbers (000)	Per cent.	Numbers (000)	Per cent.	Numbers (000)	Per cent.
1983	3,735	61	1,015	41	2,581	20
1984	3,745	62	1,080	45	2,540	19
1985	3,710	62	1,150	49	2,403	18
1986	3,720	63	1,180	52	2,368	17
1987	3,665	64	1,195	54	2,336	16
1988	3,100	55	925	43	1,260	9

Notes:

1. From April 1983 most supplementary benefit recipients, and from April 1988 most income support recipients, received assistance with rent and rates through housing benefit. The figures in (C) above therefore include those in (A) and (B) who qualified for housing benefit.
2. The information in (A) above is on the basis of receipt of supplementary benefit irrespective of assistance through housing

benefit. From April 1988 information about the tenure type of Income Support recipients is on the basis of those who also receive housing benefit.

Immunisation

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to link the receipt of child benefit and other family-related benefits to certification of completion of a basic child immunisation programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's reply to him today.

Social Fund

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on how many occasions the maximum loan of £1,000 issued from the social fund was to a claimant in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* England and Wales in the financial year 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested.

Child Benefit

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing the effects on the net income of families receiving family credit of an increase in child benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Child benefit is ignored when assessing family credit in individual cases. Instead, the level of child benefit is taken into account when setting the rates of child credits in family credit. So in April 1989, when child benefit remains unchanged, the new family credit rates included an additional 45p to reflect what would have been the increase in child benefit had it been uprated. This was on top of the increase to restore the value of the child credits and the further 50p added to all the children's rates in the income-related benefits. Increasing child benefit would not therefore have added to the total value of the child credit and child benefit.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to arrange for child benefit to be paid in respect of those young people who are aged over 18 years in secondary education who will be required to pay poll tax from April 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. Child benefit will continue in payment for young people under 19 who are in full-time non-advanced education (ie, up to A-level or equivalent standards) regardless of whether or not they are required to pay the community charge.

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will announce the social fund allocation for the new office in New Malden and also the revised allocation for Kingston following the closure of Surbiton local office on 29 June.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to his reply, 5 July 1989, column 195]:* I regret that the reply does not announce the revised annual allocation for Kingston. The information requested is as follows:

	Loans £	*Grants* £	*Period*
New Malden	62,213	29,006	29 June 1989 to 31 March 1990
Kingston	138,146	62,251	1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990

Incomes

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the source of the data on real income by decile group referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Birkenhead on 3 July, *Official Report*, columns *5-6;* and when he expects to make this data available.

Mr. Moore: The methods and assumptions used can be found in "Households below Average Income: A Statistical Analysis 1981-85", a copy of which is in the Library. Full details were provided in my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) on 15 November 1988 at columns *629-30*. Details are as follows:

Improvements in living standards
Individuals in households
Great Britain 1979-85

Decile	*Percentage*
Lowest	6
2nd	5
3rd	4
4th	4
5th	4
6th	6
7th	6
8th	9
9th	10
Highest	18
Total	9

Notes:
1. Income is defined as income from all sources less tax and national insurance contributions.
2. The incomes of all individuals within households have been adjusted for the size and composition of those households.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will list the money and percentage gains in real income of ech decile group for each year since 1979;

(2) when he expects to provide a substantive reply to the question from the hon. Member for Birkenhead on changes in real income by decile group to which he gave a holding answer on 30 June.

Mr. Moore *[holding answer 30 June 1989]:* The available information, which is adjusted for household size and composition, is as follows. Percentage changes in real equivalised household incomes by deciles of all individuals are set out in table I. It is not meaningful to produce results by decile of the whole population without allowing for the size of composition of households. For further discussion of this point the hon. Gentleman should see Cm 523 "The Measurement of Living Standards For Households Below Average Income". What the figures in table I mean in terms of changes in real income for a single person household is set out in table II.

Deciles of Individuals In Households GB
Table I
Percentage Changes In Living Standards
(Real Equivalised Household Incomes)

Percentage

Decile	*1979-81*	*1981-83*	*1983-85*
Lowest	−2·2	0·5	7·7
2nd	−0·4	1·9	3·5
3rd	−1·3	1·6	3·2
4th	−1·4	0·9	4·0
5th	−1·1	0·4	5·0
6th	−0·7	0·5	5·8
7th	−0·7	0·6	6·3
8th	0·7	0·1	7·9
9th	2·7	0·5	7·0
Highest	11·5	−1·3	7·4
Total	2·2	0·2	6·2

Table II
Money Change In Real Household Incomes For A Single Person Household—1985 Prices By Deciles of the Whole Population £ per week

Decile	*1979-81*	*1981-83*	*1983-85*
Lowest	−0·70	0·20	2·60
2nd	−0·20	0·80	1·60
3rd	−0·70	0·90	1·70
4th	−0·80	0·60	2·40
5th	−0·70	0·30	3·40
6th	−0·50	0·40	4·40
7th	−0·60	0·50	5·40
8th	0·60	0·10	7·60
9th	3·00	0·50	8·10
Highest	18·00	−2·30	12·90
Total	1·70	0·20	5·00

Notes:

1. Income is defined as income from all sources less income tax and national insurance contributions.
2. The incomes of all individuals within households have been adjusted for the size and composition of those households.
3. The equivalence scales used to adjust for household size and composition use as their basis the income for a single person household. In other words, a single person household has been attributed an equivalence scale of one so that the income of these households is the same both with and without equivalisation.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Speech Therapists (Grading)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the grades of speech therapists in Northern Ireland following the regrading under HSS(TC7)3/88 broken down by area board and showing the percentage in each grade before regrading and the percentage after.

Mr. Needham: The percentage of speech therapists in each grade at 31 March 1988 broken down by area board is as follows:

Grade	*Eastern Board*	*Northern Board*	*Southern Board*	*Western Board*
Area Senior Chief	1·39	—	—	—
Area Chief I	—	2·39	—	—
Area Chief II	—	—	5·21	4·54
Chief III	16·73	8·79	15·63	9·09
Chief IV	2·79	4·54	5·21	4·54
Senior I	52·07	58·90	41·69	68·18
Senior II	22·83	24·84	27·04	13·64
Diploma Entrant	2·79	—	5·21	—
Graduate Entrant	1·39	—	—	—

Information on grades following regrading is available only for the Eastern health and social services board as the other three boards are still consulting staff interests and have not yet implemented their proposals. The grading percentages for the Eastern board are as follows:

Grade	*Per cent.*
E	1·31
D	0·00
C	27·62
B	60·53
A	10·53

Communications

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial support has been granted to British Telecom, NI, STC and any other agencies, companies or bodies to provide advanced communications and information infrastructure.

Mr. Viggers: During the financial years 1987-88 and 1988-89 £10,689,473.

Young Mature Entry Index

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he hopes to provide information regarding the young mature entry index for Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* This index cannot be calculated from existing sources but the possibility of doing so in the future is under review.

Labour Statistics

Ms. Joyce Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will list in respect of Northern Ireland *(a)* the average rate of unemployment and the European Community average in the last three years and *(b)* the percentage of industrial employment in total employment and the European Community average.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 7 July 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

(a) Annual Average Unemployment[1] Rates

	Northern Ireland[2]	*European Community[3]*
1986	17·6	10·8
1987	17·6	10·4
1988	16·4	10·0

1. The Northern Ireland and European Community rates are not directly comparable because they are based on different definitions of unemployment.
[2] The Northern Ireland figures are based on the seasonally adjusted unemployment series.
[3] Produced by Eurostat.

(b) For 1987 (the latest year for which figures for the EC are available) industrial employment is estimated to have constituted 26·4 per cent. of total employment in Northern Ireland and 32·8 per cent. of total employment in the European Community.

PRIME MINISTER

European Economic Community

Q9. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will publish a White Paper setting out the views of Her Majesty's Government on their future policy with regard to the European Economic Community in the light of the decisions made at the Madrid meeting of the European Council.

The Prime Minister: No. I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 27 April at column *614* to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), and to my statement to the House of 29 June.

Q71. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding economic and monetary union in the European Economic Community.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations on this subject.

Gwent

Q169. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to make an official visit to Caerleon, Gwent.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Rain Forests

Q14. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding the tropical rain forests in Brazil.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of letters and other representations about the tropical rain forests of Brazil. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has returned from Brazil where he visited the Amazon region and signed a memorandum of understanding with the Brazilian Government. It provides for greater co-operation on environmental problems, including the rain forests. We shall now work to agree the details of the projects where we can assist.

Intensive Farming

Q48. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding intensive farming methods.

The Prime Minister: Intensive farming methods are among the subjects on which I receive correspondence from the public.

Low Flying

Q64. **Mr. John Browne:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding the use of low-flying aircraft by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in West Germany.

The Prime Minister: No.

Water Privatisation

Q65. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received on water privatisation.

The Prime Minister: I receive many representations about water privatisation, which represents the quickest and most cost-effective way of achieving even higher standards of water quality.

Litter

Q69. **Sir Hugh Rossi:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding litter in Britain.

The Prime Minister: I have received a large number of letters from people concerned about litter. They demonstrate wide support for tougher measures to control litter. The Government intend soon to announce a range of proposals for improving legislation in this area.

Forestry

Q70. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations on forestry policy.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of such representations.

Aid Programme

Q97. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Prime Minister when she expects to meet OXFAM to discuss Britain's aid programme as a percentage of gross national product.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so. The Government maintain close contact with non-governmental organisations such as OXFAM. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development met OXFAM as recently as 8 June and discussed a variety of aid issues. United Kingdom aid as a proportion of gross national product stood at 0·32 per cent. in 1988—14 per cent. up on the figure for 1987.

Japan

Q121. **Mr. Goodlad:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding relations with Japan.

The Prime Minister: A few. Japanese investment continues to grow. Over 100 manufacturing firms have now invested or are committed to invest a total of £3 billion to £4 billion in the United Kingdom.

Chancellor Kohl

Q133. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent meeting with Chancellor Kohl in Madrid.

The Prime Minister: I did not have a separate bilateral meeting with Chancellor Kohl in Madrid. I reported the outcome of the European Council in my statement to the House on 29 June.

EC (Competition Policy)

Q136. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding competition policy in the European Economic Community.

The Prime Minister: The Government have received several recent representations on EC competition policy issues. Most concern the draft EC merger control regulation.

Social Charter

Q157. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding the proposal of the European Commission in relation to a social charter.

The Prime Minister: I am aware of the views of both British and European employers on the Commission's proposal. They share the Government's concerns that the current proposal will do nothing to create jobs and reduce unemployment; that it will restrict flexibility in industrial relations; and that there must be clear distinctions drawn between action which is appropriate for the Community, for national Governments and for collective agreements. This last point was made strongly in the agreed conclusions of the European Council in Madrid.

Better Made in Britain

Q159. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding the Better Made in Britain campaign.

The Prime Minister: Yes. I support efforts to stimulate the competitiveness of British goods and identify opportunities to compete in the market place.

NATO

Q175. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received about the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

The Prime Minister: None. Last month's summit reaffirmed the vital importance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in preserving peace and security, as it has done for the last 40 years.

China

Q176. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister what discussions took place at the European Economic Community meeting on recent events in China; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to my statement in the House on 29 June.

Health Service

Q194. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding the Health Service.

The Prime Minister: The Government receive large numbers of representations on the National Health Service from members of the public, the professions and various interest groups. Many share the Government's desire for a Health Service that give patients more choice and rights as consumers, that is more responsible to the needs of local communities, and that builds on its existing successes and efficiency to give better value for money.

Legislative Programme

Q203. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to review Her Majesty's Government's legislative programme in the light of recent election results.

The Prime Minister: No.

EC (Financial Services)

Q204. **Sir Anthony Grant:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding financial services in the European Economic Community.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of such representations about financial services in the Community. As I made clear at the recent European Council in Madrid, the United Kingdom leads in liberalising financial markets and services. We want other member states to liberalise as we have done.

Scientists (NHS)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Prime Minister what were the pay scales of *(a)* scientific civil servants and *(b)* medical scientists employed in the National Health Service as at 1 March, both gross and net of the effects of contributory pensions.

The Prime Minister: The information is as follows. All rates are those that apply outside London.

Civil service scientists salary scale as at 1 March 1989

	Gross (£)	*Net of pension contribution[1] (£)*
Assistant Scientific Officer		
Age 16	4,254	4,190
17	4,835	4,762
18	5,500	5,418
19	6,261	6,167
	7,131	7,024
	8,090	7,969
	8,574	8,445
	9,057	8,921
Scientific Officer		
	8,574	8,445
	9,057	8,921
	9,542	9,399
	10,026	9,876
	10,509	10,351
	10,994	10,829
Higher Scientific Officer		
	10,026	9,876
	10,509	10,351
	10,994	10,829
	11,477	11,305
	11,961	11,782
	12,445	12,258
	12,943	12,749
	13,460	13,258
Senior Scientific Officer		
	12,445	12,258
	12,943	12,749
	13,460	13,258
	13,999	13,789
	14,558	14,340
	15,141	14,914
	15,746	15,510
	16,377	16,131
	17,032	16,777

Above this level Civil Service Scientists are assigned, according to responsibility, to the unified grading structure.

[1] The civil service pension scheme is non contributory but 1·5 per cent. is deducted towards dependants' pensions.

NHS scientists salary scale as at 1 March 1989

	Gross £	*Net of contributory pension*[1] £
Probationer lower qualification	7,378	6,935
	7,949	7,472
	8,255	7,760
	8,548	8,035
	8,866	8,334
	9,158	8,609
	9,452	8,885
	9,770	9,184
Probationer higher qualification	8,255	7,760
	8,548	8,035
	8,866	8,334
	9,158	8,609
	9,452	8,885
	9,770	9,184
	10,063	9,459
	10,369	9,747
Basic	8,548	8,035
	8,866	8,334
	9,158	8,609
	9,452	8,885
	9,770	9,184
	10,063	9,459
	10,568	9,934
	11,073	10,409
Senior	11,778	11,071
	12,163	11,433
	12,814	12,045
	13,440	12,634
	14,091	13,246
	14,742	13,857
	15,394	14,470
Principal	15,180	14,269
	15,899	14,945
	16,630	15,632
	17,347	16,306
	18,078	16,993
	18,810	17,681
	19,527	18,355
	20,258	19,043
	20,989	19,730
Top grade	21,136	19,868
	21,893	20,579
	23,090	21,705
	24,193	22,741
	25,297	23,779
Top grade with greater responsibility	23,914	22,479
	24,672	23,192
	25,869	24,317
	26,971	25,353
	28,088	26,403

[1] Six per cent. under NHS superannuation scheme.

Immunisation

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to encourage the pre-school immunisation programme by making starting statutory school or receipt of child benefit dependent upon child immunisation.

The Prime Minister: The Government have no plans to introduce either requirement. Take-up rates for the last year available (1987-88) were 87 per cent. for diphtheria, tetanus and polio, while measles and whooping cough at 76 per cent. and 73 per cent. respectively showed marked improvement on the previous year. We believe that the successful launch of the combined measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine from October 1988, and the proposed introduction of immunisation targets for general practitioners, will enable us to reach the World Health Organisation's objective of 90 per cent. for all these immunisations, without need for compulsion.

Cyprus

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Prime Minister (1) in which ways the United Kingdom now proposes to help to progress the United Nations sponsored talks between the two Cypriot communities following her most recent meeting with President Vassiliou; and whether she will make a statement.

(2) what further steps she plans to take over the next three months to encourage Turkey, Greece, the United States of America and the European Community to promote a successful outcome of the talks between the two Cypriot communities being held under United Nations sponsorship;

(3) what recent contacts she has had with President Bush on ways of assisting a successful outcome of the United Nations-sponsored talks between the two Cypriot communities;

(4) whether she will convene a meeting of the Turkish and Greek Prime Ministers to assist the United Nations-sponsored inter-communal talks between the two Cypriot communities before their leaders meet again in New York in September.

The Prime Minister: By continuous diplomatic contacts with all the parties concerned, including our fellow guarantor powers, Turkey and Greece, our other EC partners, the United States of America and other allies, the United Kingdom is working to promote agreement on a draft outline settlement of the Cyprus problem before the next meeting in September between the United Nations Secretary General and the leaders of the two communities in Cyprus. I had a further discussion on progress towards this goal with President Vassiliou of Cyprus on 10 July. I have not discussed Cyprus with President Bush for some time, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Baker, agreed on the need for our two Governments to follow developments closely when they met in Washington on 17 April. Meanwhile I do not believe that a meeting with the Foreign Ministers of Greece and Turkey would serve any useful purpose at this stage.

Madrid Talks

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the discussions in Madrid with Sir Leon Brittan.

The Prime Minister: Sir Leon Brittan did not attend the Madrid European Council.

Engagements

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 11 July.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 11 July.

Mr. French: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 11 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Mulroney.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cereal Fields

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many reports he has received of the flattening of circular areas in cereal fields in the south-west and other areas of England respectively: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The flattening of circular areas in cereal fields is a phenomenon known to occur from time to time. It is confined to winter cereal crops and is more prevalent in dry seasons, but we have no arrangements for recording such occurrences and therefore cannot comment on their frequency.

Bottled Water

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements are made to ensure that bottled water offered for sale is tested as being safe and acceptable for public consumption.

Mr. Ryder: Natural mineral waters, sold as such, must meet certain quality standards. The recognition of such waters and checking thereafter is the responsibility of local authorities who enforce the Natural Mineral Waters Regulations 1985. I am considering the need for other bottled waters to be covered by specific regulations. At present, local authorities may request analytical information from producers and take and analyse samples to check they they comply with the standards prescribed in EC directive 80/778/EEC relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption.

River and Coastal Protection

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total expenditure on river and sea walls, coastal protection and defences in each standard region in each year since 1979, including an estimate for the current year.

Mr. Ryder: Details of expenditure on flood and coastal defence maintenance works and non-grant-aided capital works are not available. The total expenditure on capital flood and coastal defence works including river and sea walls, in receipt of Government grant in each English region since 1979 is as follows:

Regions[1]	*[2]1979-80*	*[2]1980-81*	*[2]1981-82*	*[2]1982-83*	*[3]1983-84*	*[3]1984-85*	*[3]1985-86*	*[3]1986-87*	*[3]1987-88*	*1988-89*	*[4]1989-90*
Yorkshire (Yorkshire, North West Northumbria)	4·69	5·19	6·50	5·45	6·55	7·66	10·02	11·30	12·64	13·66	16·34
Midlands (Severn-Trent)	4·42	4·37	4·90	4·18	4·36	4·92	3·52	3·82	3·81	4·90	2·85
East Anglian	6·95	7·37	10·04	9·06	11·32	10·90	9·92	14·28	14·82	23·66	24·08
Southern (including Thames)	7·02	5·86	6·00	6·26	9·13	7·43	14·61	15·27	16·44	17·92	19·29
South West (including Wessex)	4·19	4·08	4·45	6·60	8·24	5·72	7·07	5·53	6·12	11·94	13·58
Total	[5]36·68	49·31	55·17	58·44	66·37	65·01	62·47	68·88	69·23	72·08	76·14

[1] Using Water Authority boundaries.
[2] Details of expenditure by local authorities (including maritime district councils) and Internal Drainage Boards not available by region. Overall expenditure in England included in total.
[3] Includes expenditure by maritime district councils by region. Overall expenditure by other local authorities and Internal Drainage Boards included in total.
[4] Estimate.
[5] Details of expenditure by maritime district councils on coast protection works not available.

Intervention Board

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many employees were employed by the intervention board for agriculture in each of the last four quarters ending 30 June; at which locations they were employed; and, in each case, how many were temporary staff.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Department's headquarters operation is based in Reading and Guildford. A temporary headquarters outstation has been opened in Newcastle. It also has a small regional network. The permanent and temporary staff in each location at each of the last quarters are as follows:

Location	*30 September 1988*		*31 December 1988*		*31 March 1989*		*30 June 1987*	
	Permanent	*Temporary*	*Permanent*	*Temporary*	*Permanent*	*Temporary*	*Permanent*	*Temporary*
Reading	731·5	61	725·0	75	739·5	54	746·5	82·0
Guildford	33·0	6	34·0	7	34·0	6	31·0	9·5
Newcastle	0·0	0	7·0	45	9·0	60	15·0	111·0
Bristol	6·0	0	6·0	0	6·0	0	6·0	0
Wolverhampton	5·5	0	5·5	0	5·5	0	5·5	0
Cambridge	4·5	0	4·5	0	4·5	0	4·5	0
Harrogate	4·0	0	3·0	0	3·0	0	3·0	0

United Kingdom Fishing Fleet

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the size of the United Kingdom fleet of fishing vessels in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is as follows:

United Kingdom fishing fleet 1979-88 by length group[1] as at 31 December of each year

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988[2]
Under 40 ft	4,878	4,512	4,970	4,485	5,023	5,433	5,868	6,305	6,251	6,260
40-79·9 ft	2,092	2,132	2,136	2,073	1,976	1,934	1,852	1,642	1,700	1,731
80-109·9 ft	111	114	119	120	124	128	126	131	149	159
110-139·9 ft	103	86	88	86	78	76	60	71	81	86
140 ft+	58	51	38	33	29	13	14	17	23	28
Total	7,242	6,895	7,351	6,797	7,230	7,584	7,920	8,166	8,204	8,264

[1] Changes in the number of under 40 ft vessels are due partly to changes in the definitions used for this sector of the fleet.
[2] Provisional.
The figures relate to active commercial fishing vessels.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the extent of the required reduction of the United Kingdom's fishing fleet in percentage terms and actual number of vessels under the multi-annual guidance programme over the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The required reductions during each calendar year in terms of tonnage and engine power are as follows:

	1989	Per cent.	1990	Per cent.	1991	Per cent.
Gross registered tons	15,575	9	10,895	7	8,716	6
Engine power (Kw)	52,353	6	46,368	6	37,095	5

Radioactive Foodstuffs

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the current levels of radioactivity in bq/kg or bq/l for various foodstuffs that apply after a nuclear accident and the changes proposed to those levels in the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: In the event of a nuclear emergency, the current limiting values for radioactivity in all foodstuffs placed on EC markets would be those laid down under Council regulation (EURATOM) 3954/87. This regulation was adopted on 22 December 1987. The levels so far annexed to that regulation are as follows (Bq/kg or Bq/l):

	Dairy Produce	Other foodstuffs except minor foodstuffs
Isotopes of strontium, notably Sr-90	125	750
Isotopes of iodine, notably I-131	500	2,000
Alpha-emitting isotopes of plutonium and trans-plutonium elements, notably Pu-239, Am-241	20	80
All other nuclides of half-life greater than 10 days, notably Cs-134, Cs-1387	1,000	1,250

Minor foodstuffs listed in the annex to Commission regulation (EURATOM) 944/89 will be subject to maximum permitted levels 10 times those applicable to "other foodstuffs except minor foodstuffs". Separate levels will in due course be set for liquid foodstuffs, babyfood and animal feedingstuffs. No changes to the present levels are currently under discussion within the EC.

Aquagard

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the evidence which his veterinary products committee considered prior to giving approval to give a product licence to Nuvan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Extensive data regarding safety, quality and efficacy were provided by the manufacturer of Aquagard in accordance with the requirements of article 5 of directive 81/851/EEC and directive 81/852/EEC governing product licence applications. In addition, since Aquagard is necessarily released into the marine environment the VPC considered all available data relating to the dispersion of dichlorvos and its effects on marine life.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what factors he took into account in granting a product licence for Aquaguard sea lice treatment; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he took account of the red list status of the active ingredient dichlorvos when granting a product licence for Aquaguard sea lice treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The factors to be taken into account before granting a product licence are set out in the Medicines Act 1968. The recommendation that I received from the veterinary products committee about Aquaguard took into account the reasons underlying the inclusion of dichlorvos in the Department of the Environment's provisional red list and the need for appropriate safeguards on use and disposal.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has imposed conditions and restrictions on the use of Aquaguard sea lice treatment in granting a product licence; and whether he will place a copy of the product data sheet in the Library.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I will be arranging to deposit a copy in the Library of the House when available.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish the data supplied in support of the product licence application for Aquaguard sea lice treatment by his Department, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and Ciba-Geigy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland intends to publish later this year the results of studies into the toxicity of dichlorvos to fish and lobster larvae which were undertaken in concert with my Department and Ciba-Geigy and considered by the VPC along with other data when assessing the product licence application for Aquaguard.

Beef

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what tissues and organs of a cow can be labelled as beef; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: In common with all foodstuffs, butchers' cuts of meat and meat products are subject to the general labelling provisions of the Food Labelling Regulations 1984, which require the name of food products to be sufficiently precise to inform a purchaser of the true nature of the food and to enable the food to be distinguished from products with which it could be confused.

Under the Meat Products and Spreadable Fish Products Regulations 1984, "meat" is defined for the purposes of those regulations as "flesh including fat, and the skin, rind, gristle and sinew in amounts naturally associated with the flesh used" and may include diaphragm, head meat, heart, kidney, liver, pancreas, tail meat, thymus, and tongue. These tissues and organs may be described as beef, if appropriate, in the statutory minimum meat content declaration.

Salmon Farming

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he has made provisions for the salmon farming industry to investigate an alternative, less environmentally damaging solution to the sea lice problem than the use of Aquaguard sea lice treatment; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he is conducting research into alternative and environmentally benign solutions to control sea lice on salmon farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Marine scientists in my Department and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland are in close touch with the Scottish Salmon Growers Association which has commissioned such research from the Institute of Aquaculture at the university of Stirling and from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland.

Boxworth Experimental Husbandry Farm

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to publish the results of his study into environmentally friendly agriculture carried out at Boxworth experimental husbandry farm; and if he will place a copy of the report in the Library.

Mr. Ryder: The final report of this study is currently in preparation for publication by HMSO in 1990. Annual reorts are available for the years 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987 and articles on the research have been published.

Abbatoirs

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the recent inspection of abattoirs was completed; when he expects to receive a report on the condition of abattoirs in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: EC Commission veterinary inspectors visited a sample of export-approved premises in Great Britain between 6 and 16 March. In Northern Ireland they visited premises between 3 and 6 July and will visit again between 17 and 20 July.

The confidential technical reports on the individual premises visited in Great Britain have been received from Brussels and passed to the managements of those premises and the appropriate local authorities. A formal EC Commission report on the visit as a whole is still awaited.

Fishing Licences

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the implications for rod and line fishing licences in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* Scotland of the establishment of the National Rivers Authority as proposed in the Water Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In England and Wales the requirement to hold appropriate fishing licences will remain under the National Rivers Authority. The procedures with regard to changing fishing licence duties will be slightly modified by the Water Act. The NRA will be required to publish the full scale of any new licence duties that it proposes. Where there are objections the changes may not take effect without the approval of the relevant Minister. We have removed an outmoded provision which prevented new licence duties from taking effect before the start of the next calendar year. We are, however, retaining the principle that not more than one increase in licence duties will be permitted in any 12-month period.

Fishing licences are not required in Scotland, and this remains unchanged by the Water Act.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

HMSO Publications

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the published price totals of Her Majesty's Stationery Office publications ordered by hon. Members for the latest available period, tabulated per Member.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is not available as individual issues ordered by right hon. and hon. Members are not recorded.

Council of Europe (Visit of President Gorbachev)

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make arrangements to make the statement of President Gorbachev to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 6 July available to hon. and right hon. Members.

Mr. Wakeham: Copies are available in the Library.

TRANSPORT

Merchant Shipping

96. **Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the total tonnage of merchant shipping which could be requisitioned for supplying reinforcements during a war.

Mr. Portillo: At the end of April 1989, 71 British flag dry cargo vessels, totalling 1·8 million deadweight tonnes, were earmarked for carrying transatlantic reinforcement equipment and supplies to Europe. All this tonnage could be requisitioned.

Traffic Speeds

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average speed of traffic in *(a)* central London and *(b)* central Liverpool.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The average speed of traffic in central London is about 11 miles per hour throughout the working day. Comparable information is not available for central Liverpool.

Road Standards

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidelines his Department issues to local authorities as to *(a)* road surface condition and *(b)* standards of road repair; and how these are enforced.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Local highway authorities determine standards for their roads. Advice on standards for local roads is contained in the local authority associations' code of good practice for highway maintenance. We understand that a revised edition of that code will be published later this year. The standing committee on highway maintenance is planning to monitor the introduction of the code, and the application of certain key standards relating to road surface condition.

For trunk roads, where local highway authorities act as the Department's agents for maintenance, authorities receive instructions on the standards to be applied. The Department works closely with local highway authorities in developing these standards, many of which are helpful to local authorities in setting standards for their own roads.

Fishing Vessels

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any proposals to introduce regulations covering the carriage of immersion suits on United Kingdom registered fishing vessels over 10 metres in overall length as part of their life-saving equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The carriage of life-saving appliances, including immersion suits, on fishing vessels is under examination by the Department in consultation with the fishing industry as part of the review of the Fishing Vessel (Safety Provisions) Rules 1975.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* the names, number of fatalities and port of registration of United Kingdom registered fishing vessels which have been lost in each of the past five years.

Mr. Portillo: The names of United Kingdom registered fishing vessels which have been lost in the past five years are listed together with fatalities.

It is not possible in all cases to give the port of registry for vessels for the years 1984-86 as this information is not readily available.

Name of Vessel	*Port of Registry*	*Deaths*
1984		
Navena	Fleetwood	—
Cato	Brixham	—
Big John	Brixham	—
Idavale	Fraserburgh	—
Vertrouwen		—
Ocean Herald II	Buckie	—
Cawsand Bay	Peterhead	—
Tribute	Newry	—
Sundari	Peterhead	1
Wavell	Grimsby	—
Sunrise		—
Star of Promise	Peterhead	—
Searcher		—
Margarita	Tarbert	—
Fertile	Peterhead	—
Sanoy Bay	Stornoway	—
Whyalla	Inverness	—
Dalch Mad	Llanelli—Wales	—
May queen II	Leith	—
Leon Jeannine	Brixham	—
Concord	Montrose	—
Brussina		—
Shearwater		3
Michelle	Poole	2
Sea Falcon		—
Carol Sandra		4
North Wind III		3
South Stack	Beaumaris	3
Dominator		—
Orion	Stornoway	—
Dawn Marie		—
Juniper 2	Poole	—
Janie B	Rye	—
Helen R	Oban	—
Rampager		—
Sea Gypsy	Fleetwood	—
Heather Valley	Newry	—
Intrepid		—
Cordoba	Montrose	—
Channel Avenger	Weymouth	—
Rolyn		—
1985		
Pescoso 2		—
Ship Burton	Hull	—
Boston Stirling	Fleetwood	—
Meva	Shoreham	—
Golden Strand	Oban	—
Our Catherine	Scarborough	—
Mhari-L	Hull	5
Clarion	Fraserburgh	—
Ocean Dawn		—
Thalassa	Brixham	—
Ardgour II	Kirkcaldy	—
Lady Dahra		—
Fearnot	Stornoway	—

Name of Vessel	Port of Registry	Deaths
Kelly M	Scarborough	—
Waldrian	Grimsby	1
Ocean Harvest	Banff	4
Sea Hunter	Fraserburgh	—
Aurora	Peterhead	—
Lisa Olesen	Grimsby	—
Kingfisher	Fleetwood	—
Bon Ami	Banff	6
Rolyn		—
Newcomen		—
Dorothy E		—
My Emma		2
Provide Us		—
Supreme	Peterhead	—
Rachel		—
Redemption	Whitby	—
Minerva	Fraserburgh	—
Northern Star		—
Valhalla	Lerwick	—
Kate Violet		—
Pearl		—
Fisherman 1		—
Tiercel	Broadford	1
Colleen	Bideford	—
Lorna Ann	Barrow	—
Lady Kingswood		—
Tina Ann		1
1986		
Contessa Viv	Lowestoft	5
Pride of Redcar	Hartlepool	—
La Morlaye	Leith	—
Foxglove	Wick	—
Amoria	Fraserburgh	—
Pescado	Teignmouth	3
LBP	Salcombe	—
Avondale	Leith	—
Sonia Jane	Grimsby	—
Connaught	Fraserburgh	—
Happy Hooker		—
Danny Boy	Rye	—
Sea Cat		—
A Salmon Cobble		—
Jake II	Campbeltown	—
My Boy	Berwick on Tweed	—
End of the World		—
Sir Percival	Weymouth	—
Rosnuala	Campbeltown	—
1987		
Loch Kildovan	Peterhead	—
Freemantle	Peterhead	—
Guide Onwards	Inverness	—
Constant Star	Peterhead	—
Stella Marie	Peterhead	—
Dayspring	Scarborough	—
Anmara	Hull	3
Grateful	Fowey	—
Angela	Peterhead	1
Onward Fisher	Fleetwood	—
Galilean	Penzance	—
KMB	Dartmouth	—
Ptarmigan	Buckie	—
Girl Maureen	Portsmouth	—
1988		
Laura Jane	Padstow	2
Gillian Claire	Penzance	3
Southern Enterprise	Southampton	3
Ocean Gain	Stornoway	—
Albert II	Broadford	2
Frey I	Campbeltown	—
Couldn't Help It	Cowes I.O.W.	—
Emma Jane	Poole	—
Budding Rose	Peterhead	—
Choice	Buckie	—
Inspire	Cardigan	3
Guldborg	Hull	—
Our Tracey Jane	Hartlepool	—
Jeremy Gordon	Scarborough	2
Tarka	Ramsgate	1
Mayford	Lowestoft	2
Utopia	Fraserburgh	—
Kingfisher	Stornoway	—
Silver Crest	Lowestoft	—
Internos	Campbeltown	—
Fortitude	Banff	—

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to increase the penalty for abuse of the orange badge scheme for severely disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Misuse of an orange badge already carries a maximum fine of £400. The level of penalty is kept under review. Badges can be withdrawn by local authorities in cases of persistent misuse.

We must make it easier for the police and traffic wardens to spot abuse of the scheme. We have proposed that the orange badge should be redesigned in the form of a more robust personal passport-type of document. There would be space for a photograph of the holder. We shall be looking at ways in which the badge could be displayed which would avoid fixing it permanently to the windscreen, thereby making it difficult to remove. This approach has been widely welcomed by people with disabilities and their representative organisations and by other groups.

Driving Tests (Durham)

Mr Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average waiting time for a driving test in Durham.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Twelve weeks.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what constraints his Department sets on financial investment in new infrastructure by British Rail, with particular reference to the required rate of return from investment: if these constraints apply to the British Rail proposals to build a Channel tunnel rail link through Kent and south east London; what is the present projected cost of the Channel tunnel rail link project; at what rate of return the line will operate under the present plans; and at what projected date the CTRL line is expected to make a return on the investment.

Mr. Portillo: The Government's required rate of return for commercial public sector programme is 8 per cent. If the Channel tunnel rail link were to be financed by British Rail, it would be appraised using a discount rate reflecting this rate of return. British Rail is currently discussing its proposals with the private sector with a view to securing private investment in the scheme.

The cost of the high-speed link is estimated at about £1·7 billion. Appraisal of the scheme to estimate a rate of return is not yet complete.

Motoring Offences

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many persons in London have been reported for offences of *(a)* having no current excise licence, *(b)* no insurance, *(c)* no Ministry of Transport certificate, *(d)* having vehicle in unroadworthy condition and *(e)* driving whilst disqualified since 16 May.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I understand that the information sought could not be assembled except at disproportionate cost.

Road-side Checks (Tax Discs)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many *(a)* police officers and *(b)* Department of Transport officials have been engaged in the campaign to identify motorists without tax discs announced for Greater London on 3 May;

(2) how many motorists have so far been stopped in the road-side checks announced on 3 May for Greater London;

(3) what has been the cost to public funds so far of the campaign in London to identify tax disc dodgers announced by his Department on 3 May;

(4) what results have been obtained so far in the campaign against motor tax dodgers in London announced on 3 May.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As part of their continuing enforcement duties, the Department's officials spent 1,600 man hours during the recent campaign in London in detecting vehicle excise evaders. The estimated manpower cost was £7,000. I understand that the Metropolitan and City police devoted a similar effort to the task.

Only vehicles whose tax discs were not clearly visible or appeared to be out of date were stopped. Of these, 3,800 are being investigated with a view to prosecution where an excise offence has been committed. The Department's publicity costs totalled £145,000.

Road Accidents

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people were killed on roads in *(a)* Merseyside and *(b)* St. Helens for each of the last five years; how many of those killed were children or pedestrians or both; how many were sitting in the rear seats of motor vehicles and unstrapped; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* The following table show the number of deaths in road accidents for each of the last five years for which complete information is available, broken down as requested, for *(a)* Merseyside and *(b)* St. Helens.

	Total	*Children Killed*	*Pedestrians*	*Child Pedestrians*	*Rear seat strapped*	*Rear seat unstrapped/ unknown*
Road deaths in Merseyside: 1983-87						
1983	95	20	56	16	0	8
1984	128	25	80	21	0	4
1985	109	11	62	8	0	6
1986	102	10	59	9	1	5
1987	105	9	61	7	0	3
Road deaths in St. Helens: 1983-87						
1983	14	4	7	2	0	1
1984	15	1	8	0	0	1
1985	12	0	4	0	0	2
1986	12	0	7	0	0	0
1987	4	0	0	0	0	0

The use of seat belts saves lives. We should continue to take every opportunity to get that message across.

In April this year we published a major package of measures aimed at improving pedestrian safety, which we intend to implement as quickly as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

Benefit Disqualifications

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what are the results of his monitoring of the disqualification periods imposed on people deemed to have left work without good cause, since the increase in maximum disqualification period from 13 to 26 weeks;

(2) in how many cases, where a claimant for unemployment benefit has been disqualified on the ground of leaving employment without good cause, the disqualification period has been 26 weeks.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply. An analysis of a sample of adjudication officers' decisions taken during the first three months of this year indicates that disqualification for unemployment benefit in circumstances generally known as "voluntary unemployment" was imposed for the full 26-week period in less than two-thirds of the cases. The sample included those disqualified for leaving employment without just cause. The full information obtained from the monitoring exercises is currently being analysed and the results will be published shortly.

Children (Employment)

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he intends to bring into force the Employment of Children Act 1973.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

The Government have no plans to implement the Employment of Children Act 1973. All local authorities (except Isles of Scilly) have byelaws which regulate the hours and conditions of children's employment. The

majority of byelaws follow departmental guidance of 1976 which is based on the proposed content of regulations under the 1973 Act.

Strikes

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many working days were lost through strikes in 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: In the 12 months ending March 1989, 2,858,000 working days were lost through stoppages of work due to industrial disputes. This figure is about one quarter of the average for the previous 10 years.

Low Pay

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to deal with the problem of low pay.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) on Tuesday 16 May at column *164*.

Labour Statistics

44. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current levels of employment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: In December 1988 the work force in employment in the United Kingdom stood at 26,510,000, the highest level on record. This represents an increase of 2,948,000 or 12·5 per cent. since March 1983. The rising trend has now continued for more than five years. The figures have been adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations. The work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed, Her Majesty's forces and participants on work-related Government training programmes.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been unemployed for 12 months or more in the City of Durham constituency.

Mr. Lee: The information is available from the Library. In April 1989, the latest available date, the number of unemployed claimants in the City of Durham parliamentary constituency who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 1,109.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish an analysis of known job vacancies in Durham by skill category required.

Mr. Lee: There is no analysis available by skill category. However, vacancies are analysed by occupation and industry.

Industrial Accidents

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to monitor the accident rates for trainees on the employment training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: Yes. Accident statistics will be collected and monitored on the employment training scheme along lines already operating in YTS.

Tourism

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has further to encourage the growth of tourism and tourist-related jobs in East Anglia currently and after 1992.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave on 6 July at column *287* to a question from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan). The changes to the operation of both the British Tourist Authority (BTA) and the English tourist board (ETB) set out in that statement are intended to result in even more effective support by these boards and by the East Anglia tourist board for the growth of tourism in East Anglia now and after 1992.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has received on the proposals of section 4 grants for tourism development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received representations expressing a variety of views about the section 4 scheme. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend on 6 July to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) concerning the future of the scheme.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has had recently from operators of the touring caravan sites section of the tourist industry; and what advice his Department will be giving them further to develop their job-creating potential.

Mr. Lee: The caravan sector is an important part of the tourism industry, providing a large number of jobs, both in caravan manufacture, and in servicing caravan sites. The quality of both has improved substantially in recent years, and I am keen to see the caravan industry continue to develop its potential. I welcome the industry's initiative in marketing itself through a national promotional campaign, in introducing a grading scheme for parks, and in bringing the industry's potential to the notice of planning officials to encourage positive attitudes towards planning applications. I also welcome the substantial capital investment that is currently taking place in this sector.

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list information available to him on the top 10 national visitor-paying tourist attractions by *(a)* number of visitors, *(b)* revenue received and *(c)* where appropriate, profit made during 1988, and the top 10 in the East Midlands tourist board area according to the same criteria.

Mr. Lee: The financial information requested could be made available only at disproportionate cost. The national tourist boards' annual surveys of numbers of visits to paying attractions give the following figures for Britain and for the East Midlands tourist board area:

	Number of visits Thousands
Britain	
Madame Tussaud's, London	2,705
Alton Towers, Staffordshire	2,510

	Number of visits Thousands
Tower of London	2,182
Blackpool Tower	1,478
Natural History Museum	1,367
London Zoo	1,326
Kew Gardens	1,181
Chessington World of Adventures	1,151
Magnum Leisure Centre, Irvine	1,080
Thorpe Park, Surrey	1,028
East Midlands	
The American Adventure	660
Twycross Zoo	470
Sundown Pets Garden, Rampton	230
Heights of Abraham, Matlock	206
Riber Castle Wildlife Centre	170
Lincoln Castle	165
Battlefield of Bosworth	150
National Tramway Museum	150
Belvoir Castle, Grantham	117
Poole's Cavern, Buxton	100

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total value of tourism in Leicestershire at current prices in each of the years from 1979 to 1989.

Mr. Lee: The available information for Leicestershire is shown in table 1 and relates to expenditure by overseas visitors to the United Kingdom who made a trip of at least one night to Leicestershire. Information about spending by domestic residents is available only for the whole of the East Midlands tourist board region, and is shown in table 2 together with the equivalent information for overseas visitors. Figures for tourist expenditure by United Kingdom residents on day trips to Leicestershire or the east midlands are not available.

Table 1
Estimated spending in Leicestershire by overseas residents[1]

	£ million
1979	9
1980	12
1981	11
1982	13
1983	14
1984	17
1985	20
1986	17
1987	17
1988	25

[1] *Source:* International Passenger Survey.

Table 2
Estimated spending in east midlands[3]

	By overseas residents[1]	By British residents[2]	Total
			£ million
1979	37	132	169
1980	43	154	197
1981	21	170	191
1982	53	175	228
1983	62	196	258
1984	79	[4]230	309
1985	85	234	319
1986	80	305	385
1987	89	290	379
1988	94	365	459

[1] *Source:* International Passenger Survey.
[2] *Source:* British Tourist Authority.
[3] East Midlands Regional Tourist Board comprising: Leicestershire together with Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Northamptonshire.
[4] From 1984 an improved method of estimating expenditure was introduced for domestic spending. Figures for 1984 and later years are, therefore not, strictly comparable with those for earlier years.

EC Blue Flag Award

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department has taken to congratulate those responsible and to promote the winners of this year's European Community blue flag award for beaches and bathing waters.

Mr. Lee: Today I took part in flag-raising ceremonies at two of the 1989 award-winning beaches, namely Bournemouth and Poole, as part of national Blue Flag Day. I would like to congratulate this year's 22 winners, including Lowestoft South beach in my hon. Friend's constituency, and the Tidy Britain Group, the Water Authorities Association, and the English Tourist Board, who support the awards in this country.

Employment Training

Mrs. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total amount to date expended on the employment training scheme; and what is the amount of money expended per trainee.

Mr. Nicholls: Some £566 million had been spent on employment training up to the end of May 1989. The estimated cost per trainee is £2,300.

ENERGY

Hinkley Point C Inquiry

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply of 26 June, *Official Report*, column *350*, on the extent of the cost to public funds of the Hinkley Point C inquiry, if he will state *(a)* the best estimate given to him to date by the Central Electricity Generating Board of the costs of the inquiry borne or to be borne by it and *(b)* his assessment of the costs so far incurred by local authorities.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The costs incurred by the CEGB are a matter for them. I have asked the chairman of the board to write to my hon. Friend.

Harwell

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all the facilities currently subject to either Euratom or the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards at Harwell.

Mr. Michael Spicer: All civil nuclear material at Harwell is subject to Euratom safeguards and to the terms of the UK/IAEA/Euratom safeguards agreement. The IAEA has not chosen to designate facilities at Harwell for inspection.

Energy Technology Support Unit

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current and past contribution of the energy technology support unit to the United Kingdom energy programme.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Since 1974, the energy technology support unit has provided, and continues to provide, project management services for the Department's renewables and energy efficiency research, development, and demonstration programmes. Through the chief scientist's group, it also provides technical and analytical support for the Department.

Sizewell C

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has had recently on the case for a public inquiry into the Central Electricity Generating Board proposal to build Sizewell C in Suffolk; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend has directed the CEGB to advertise its application for his consent to construct a second PWR nuclear power station at Sizewell and has allowed a period up to 30 September in which objections can be made to him.

Until he has seen all such objections and has received the views of the relevant local planning authorities, it is too early to say whether a public inquiry will be necessary.

To date, my Department has registered some 700 objections to the application.

New Headquarters (Cost)

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the cost per occupant of the construction and equipment of his Department's new headquarters offices.

Mr. Parkinson: My Department's headquarters is being fitted out to normal Government standards, including those covering fire and security, set by the Property Services Agency and the Treasury. The cost is borne on the PSA's vote. My Department will be paying a rent to the PSA reflecting the full opportunity cost of the building.

Wylfa

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will extend the time for submitting objections and making representations to the inquiry into the Central Electricity Generating Board's application for a pressurised water reactor at Wylfa to 31 October 1989.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. I believe that the period of three months that my right hon. Friend has allowed for objections is ample time for anyone wishing to object to the CEGB's application to do so.

The requirements for publicity to be given to power station applications are set out in the Electricity (Publication of Applications) Regulations 1957. These regulations state that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State must give a period of not less than 21 days in which objections can be made to him. The period of three months that my right hon. Friend has allowed is simply for objections to be registered pursuant to section 34 of the Electricity Act of 1957. If he calls for an inquiry to be held, all registered objectors will be sent details of the inquiry including the procedures to be followed if the objector wishes to give evidence.

HEALTH

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list, by district health authority *(a)* the current nursing staff establishment, *(b)* the number in post at the latest available date and *(c)* the number who have left the National Health Service in the preceding year.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 4 July at column *152*, regarding the number of nursing staff in post.

We do not collect information on nursing staff establishments centrally. We expect to have some information on the number leaving the NHS later this year.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether decisions have been made on proposals made by health authorities under the pilot scheme for flexible pay supplements for nursing and midwifery staff in 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes. Regional health authorities are being notified today of the decisions which have been taken on their bids and of their additional financial allocations. Copies of the notifications will be placed in the Library.

District health authorities were invited to bid, through their region, against the sum—not exceeding £5 million—which the Government have made available in 1989-90 for a pilot scheme on flexible pay supplements for nursing and midwifery staff. I received a very positive response. Many authorities welcomed the opportunity to use this scheme to meet particular recruitment and retention difficulties for such staff. In total, I received 157 bids from 10 regions, covering 7,792 posts.

Decisions on the bids were taken by Ministers, following detailed analysis by a small panel of departmental and NHS officials. The main criteria used in assessing the bids were vacancy rates; turnover rates; degree of use of agency/bank staff and of overtime; the impact of these factors on service delivery; non-pay initiatives taken by authorities; and local labour market issues.

Altogether, 116 bids (covering 5,804 posts) were accepted as they stood; 19 bids (1,235 posts) were accepted but reduced in coverage to 963 posts; 9 bids (281 posts) accepted but extended in coverage to 397 posts; and 13 bids (472 posts) were rejected.

The supplements which cover all grades in the clinical structure and which range from £200 to £1,000, are payable from 1 July 1989.

Our evidence to the nurses' pay review body on the future of the scheme will take account of our experience of this first round of bids and of the close monitoring of the effects of the supplements that we are undertaking.

A summary of the bids approved, and their cost, is set out in the table.

Region	*Number of posts covered*	*Total cost (including on-costs)* £
Yorkshire	190	146,926
Trent	333	267,374
East Anglia	998	651,077

Region	Number of posts covered	Total cost (including on-costs) £
North West Thames	1,621	1,091,058
North East Thames	62	38,530
South East Thames	1,219	959,239
South West Thames	2,067	1,077,027
Oxford	272	213,873
West Midlands	324	188,994
North Western	78	64,935
TOTAL	7,164	4,699,033

Mersey Regional Health Authority

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases were on the inpatient waiting list in the Mersey regional health authority at the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor: On 30 September 1988, there were 32,121 such cases.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what services have been contracted out within the Mersey regional health authority to date; and what savings have been made or are expected from such contracting-out.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not collected centrally in the form requested. As a result of the Government's 1983 competitive tendering initiative for domestic, catering and laundry services annual savings of almost £6 million have been generated in the Mersey region with around £1½ million resulting from contracts awarded to outside contractors. This tendering process is being extended within the region, to varying degrees, to portering services, grounds and gardens, building, engineering and equipment maintenance, energy management, waste disposal and computer information services, with outside contractors winning some contracts or otherwise stimulating improvements in in-house services. For more detailed information my hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of the regional health authority.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many capital schemes of over £1 million *(a)* have been completed and *(b)* are under construction in the National Health Service Mersey region since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: Information held centrally shows that 22 schemes over £1 million have been completed in the National Health Service Mersey region since 1 January 1979, for a total expenditure, including fees and equipment of approximately £140 million, and one is under construction.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the percentage bed occupancy was in *(a)* the Mersey regional health authority and *(b)* England in the latest available year.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table. The health services information steering group (chaired by Mrs. E. Korner) recommended in its first report that bed occupancy statistics no longer be used as an indicator of efficient bed use.

Average daily available beds and occupied beds, 1987-88

	Available beds	Occupied beds	Percentage occupancy
England	297,342	240,000[1]	81
Mersey regional health authority	16,653	13,820	83

[1] Estimate

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the level of health expenditure in the Mersey region, expressed per household in *(a)* 1978-79 and *(b)* the latest available year in (i) cash terms and (ii) terms adjusted for inflation.

Mr. Freeman: Expenditure by household for individual regional health authorities is not available centrally. My hon. Friend may therefore wish to write to the chairman of Mersey regional health authority who may be able to provide information.

My hon. Friend may however find the following centrally available information of help. Per capita expenditure by Mersey regional health authority on hospital and community health services in 1978-79 = £91·34 million.

The comparable figure for 1987-88 (latest year available) = £229·77 million in cash terms and (ii) £112·47 million expressed by 1978-79 values (a real terms increase of 23 per cent.).

These figures exclude expenditure on the family practitioner services in the Mersey region.

Neonatal and Perinatal Mortality

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the neonatal and perinatal mortality rates are for each of the last five years for which figures are available in the United Kingdom; and what are the comparable figures for the other individual member states of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Freeman: The tables give the latest available data from the Statistical Office of the European Community's "Eurostat" volume 1988 and the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' "Population Trends No. 56."

Perinatal[1] and neonatal[2] mortality rates, European Economic Community countries 1982-88

Country	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Perinatal							
Belgium	12·6	12·2	11·3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Denmark	8·7	9·0	8·4	8·1	8·4	n/a	n/a
France	12·1	11·4	11·1	10·7	10·4	n/a	n/a
Greece	16·8	16·5	16·6	15·7	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ireland	13·5	13·7	13·6	12·3	n/a	n/a	n/a
Italy	16·0	15·2	[3]14·5	[3]13·2	[3]12·8	n/a	n/a
Luxembourg	12·0	10·7	8·8	7·8	7·2	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	10·0	10·1	10·0	9·8	9·7	n/a	n/a
Portugal	23·8	21·4	21·0	21·6	19·9	n/a	n/a
Spain	12·9	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Country	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
West Germany	9·6	9·3	8·6	7·9	7·6	n/a	n/a
United Kingdom	11·4	10·5	10·2	9·9	9·6	9·0	n/a
Neonatal							
Belgium	6·7	6·5	5·9	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Denmark	4·8	4·6	4·7	4·7	5·1	n/a	n/a
France	5·3	5·0	4·7	4·6	4·3	n/a	n/a
Greece	11·5	10·9	10·8	10·6	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ireland	6·6	6·1	6·0	5·3	4·8	n/a	n/a
Italy	10·3	9·6	[3]9·1	[3]8·1	[3]7·7	n/a	n/a
Luxembourg	6·3	6·5	6·0	2·9	4·2	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	5·1	5·3	5·1	5·0	4·8	n/a	n/a
Portugal	13·8	11·5	11·3	12·2	10·8	n/a	n/a
Spain	7·9	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
West Germany	6·3	5·9	5·5	5·0	4·8	n/a	n/a
United Kingdom	6·4	5·9	5·7	5·4	5·3	5·0	4·9

[1] Deaths in the first week of life and stillbirths per thousand live and stillbirths.
[2] Deaths in the first 28 days of life (27 completed days) per thousand live births.
[3] Provisional data.

Nursing Teachers (Salaries)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to inform nursing teachers of the salary to be awarded to the grades they have recently been allotted; and whether he will publish the grades and salaries attached in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Mellor: The review body has submitted its report to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Decisions on the implementation of the review body's recommendations will be taken in the normal way.

Private Health Screening Clinics

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration he has given to the code of practice recently published by the Independent Hospitals Association for the conduct of private health screening clinics; and what assessment has been made of the medical qualifications required of the staff.

Mr. Mellor: We welcome the Independent Hospitals Association's initiative to improve the quality of services in the private sector. We are considering the association's proposals in the light of the White Paper "Working for Patients" and our objectives for improved levels of care and wider patient choice.

Water Contamination (North Cornwall)

Mr. Neale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the South West regional health authority in conjunction with the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly health authority are continuing to interview patients in the Camelford area of north Cornwall; and if he will make a statement on the progress of these investigations.

Mr. Freeman: The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly health authority has arranged for a consultant to see those people from the Camelford area who wish to have a medical check following exposure to the water contaminated with aluminium sulphate. These medical checks are carried out every Saturday morning at the East Cornwall hospital. The necessary support facilities are available should the consultant wish to refer anyone for further medical examination.

These sessions will continue for as long as is needed. They are additional to the normal health service provision, available at the time of the pollution incident and since, whereby anyone can consult a general practitioner for both diagnosis and treatment and can be referred to a hospital consultant by the general practitioner.

Medical Services (Durham)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the current average waiting times for women in Durham district health authority waiting for results of cervical smear.

Mr. Mellor: All results are made available to the patient's GP within two weeks.

Anthony Porter

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will establish an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of Anthony Porter after an incident at North Tees hospital in December 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I am considering my hon. Friend's letter of 23 June on this subject, to which a reply will be sent shortly.

Hospital Facilities

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list in the *Official Report* for each of the past five years, those hospital facilities in England that fell short of acceptable standards referred to in paragraph 16 of the first annual report of Her Majesty's inspector of pollution.

Mr. Freeman: I assume that the inquiry relates to the paragraph 16 on page 26 of the report which refers to the inspections of hospitals under the Medicines (Administration of Radioactive Substances) Regulations.

Following these inspections, Her Majesty's inspector of pollution reports to the Department on various requirements for certification under these regulations. These reports may include general comments about the facilities available to clinicians administering radioactive substances. If the Department feels that there is cause for concern, the matter is pursued with the health authority. Should the Department consider, following investigation, that the facilities no longer reach an acceptable standard,

certificate(s) of the clinician(s) using those facilities would be suspended or revoked. No certificates have been so suspended or revoked during the last five years.

Scientists

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the percentage contribution from employers to the pension scheme of scientists in medicine employed by the National Health Service over the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: Over the last five years, the contribution from NHS employers to the NHS superannuation scheme for all NHS employees was 7·5 per cent. of superannuable pay up to and including 31 March 1989 and 4 per cent. from 1 April 1989.

Rotherham Hospital

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received the recent letter from the Rotherham Hospital Medical Staff committee expressing grave concern about the maintenance of services; and if additional resources will be provided for the Rotherham health authority.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has received a letter from the Rotherham Hospital Medical Staff committee. Allocation of resources to individual health authorities is a matter for the relevant regional health authority; in Rotherham's case, this is Trent.

Immunisation

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to extend basic child immunisation for the 0 to 5 years age group.

Mr. Freeman: The joint committee on vaccination and immunisation, which advises the health departments on all aspects of immunisation, has set up a group to consider and make recommendations on the present childhood immunisation schedule and on future developments. We shall consider the JCVI's views when they are available.

Alcohol Problems

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to recognise new centres for the management of alcohol problems as designated places; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health is at present considering the designation of one new centre for the management of alcohol problems in Southampton.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of *(a)* botulism, *(b)* salmonella enteriditis, *(c)* salmonella typhimurium and *(d)* other types of food poisoning had been detected or reported for each month since Janaury.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* The information requested is given in the tables. Laboratory reports of campylobacter infections are collated weekly, and four-weekly totals to 16 June are given, but it is not known how many of these infections are food-borne.

Number of cases of principal types of food poisoning detected or reported January-June 1989

	January	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*
Clostridium Botulinum	—	—	—	—	—	27
Salmonella Enteritidis	733	826	742	671	779	n.a.
Salmonella Typhimurium	318	254	227	200	329	n.a.
Other Salmonellas	367	235	244	235	256	n.a.
Clostridium Perfringens	16	46	228	8	2	44
Staphylococcus Aureus	4	7	10	—	50	—
Bacillus SP	—	3	5	3	3	—

n.a. = Not yet available.

Number of laboratory reports for Campylobacter infection, four-weekly to 16 June 1989

Weeks	*Number*
01—04	1,480
05—08	1,915
09—12	1,944
13—16	1,625
17—20	2,225
21—24	4,175

Source: PHLS
Note: All figures are provisional

ENVIRONMENT

Sewage Outfall, Royal Portbury Dock

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will instruct Wessex Water to extend the proposed 900 m sewage outfall being built adjacent to Royal Portbury dock to the full 2 km length; and if he will make a statement on what length outfall is appropriate in coastal waters such as the Bristol channel.

Mr. Howard: Before granting a discharge consent for any new sea outfall scheme, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution must be satisfied that the scheme will enable bathing waters in the vicinity to meet the standards of the EEC bathing water directive. The length of the outfall required to achieve this objective will depend on local factors such as tides, currents, depth of water and prevailing winds. The average length of long sea outfalls is around 2 km. However, local conditions may mean that they can be longer or shorter than this. Relevant studies of the hydrographical conditions near the Royal Portbury dock indicated that a 900 m outfall would be the most appropriate length. Accordingly, a discharge consent for such an outfall was granted by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in July 1987.

Air Conditioning

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research his Department has undertaken into air conditioning of office buildings.

Mr. Trippier: The Building Research Establishment has carried out research into the design and performance of air conditioning of office buildings over a number of years. Working with the Property Services Agency and the industry, the establishment has provided a major contribution to industry standards, such as the design guides, application manuals and building energy codes of the Chartered Institute of Building Service Engineers. The topics covered have included air infiltration, calculation of summertime overheating, plant capacity, thermal comfort conditions and operating costs. More recently, work has been focused on the "sick building syndrome", the emerging problems of CFCs, and means of improving

energy efficiency. A copy of the published research programme of the Building Research Establishment is in the Library of the House.

Rent Arrears

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the in the *Official Report* the 30 local authorities in England with the largest amounts of rent arrears, with the amounts outstanding and the number of people owing in each case.

Mr. Trippier: The information, for the end of March 1988, is listed as follows:

	Rent arrears[1] *£000s*	*Number of current and former tenants in arrears*[2]
1. Southwark	19,019	. .
2. Lambeth	12,554	. .
3. Liverpool	11,220	. .
4. Islington	9,764	. .
5. Hackney	8,418	. .
6. Brent	[3]8,100	20,140
7. Manchester	8,085	55,368
8. Sheffield	5,449	. .
9. Birmingham	5,263	46,950
10. Greenwich	4,785	. .
11. Lewisham	4,700	. .
12. Camden	4,660	25,230
13. Haringey	4,119	. .
14. Walsall	4,016	21,946
15. Newham	3,626	. .
16. Wolverhampton	3,329	. .
17. Waltham Forest	3,141	. .
18. Wandsworth	2,409	16,081
19. Newcastle upon Tyne	2,321	26,774
20. Knowsley	2,282	16,898
21. Tower Hamlets	2,218	23,068
22. Ealing	2,196	11,727
23. Leicester	2,188	21,444
24. Hammersmith and Fulham	2,153	16,511
25. Leeds	2,136	32,721
26. Sandwell	2,101	21,985
27. Bradford	2,002	21,588
28. Salford	1,867	18,616
29. Westminster	1,779	12,577
30. Kirklees	1,627	14,344

[1] Cumulative rent arrears are reported to the Department on local authorities' Housing Subsidy Claim forms, but these do not give the number of tenants in arrears.

[2] Local authority tenants owing rent, rates and other charges as reported to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and published in "Housing Rents Statistics at April 1988" are given where available (. . indicates not available).

[3] Department of the Environment estimate of rent arrears based on reported total tenants' arrears (including rates etc.) of £16·7 million.

Council House Sales

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals for a code of conduct for the offer by local authorities of council housing to ex-service personnel.

Mr. Trippier: Advice to local authorities is already available in my Department's circular 54/75, which requests that local authorities consider sympathetically applications from men and women leaving Her Majesty's forces.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he or Ministers or officials of his Department have recently met the head of the United Nations environment programme's industry and environment office to discuss matters pertinent to the United Kingdom or European Community environmental protection.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government fully support the work of the United Nations environment programme's industry and environment office. Officials in the Department of the Environment are in regular contact with the industry and environment office and have recently been discussing the creation of an international network to promote the exchange of information on clean technology.

Environment and Development

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what initiatives he has taken to implement recommendations made by the Brundtland committee on world environment and development.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The United Kingdom is one of a very small number of countries to have published a formal response to the report of the world commission on environment and development. The London "Saving the Ozone Layer" conference in March, attended by 123 countries, gave strong support to the report's concept of sustainable development. In September the United Kingdom is to host a workshop on awareness raising and public participation as part of the preparations for next year's ministerial conference in Bergen which will examine the implementation of the report in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is Her Majesty's Government policy towards proposals by the United Nations to hold a conference on environment and development in 1992.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government fully support the proposal for a United Nations conference on environment and development in 1992. The United Kingdom will be taking an active part in the preparations and will aim to ensure that the conference reaches agreement on the actions needed to tackle global environmental problems.

Planning Applications (Harrogate)

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of appeals carried out into planning applications in the Harrogate borough council area during each of the last three years.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is as follows.

Year	*Planning appeals*			
	Received	*Decided*	*Allowed*	*Withdrawn*
1986-87	92	64	21	11
1987-88	104	87	30	17
1988-89	121	96	28	15

Ivory

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment under what powers he has imposed a unilateral ban on ivory imports.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The ban on ivory imports is based on article 10 1(b) of EC regulation 3626/82. We consider that the decline in African elephant populations is so serious that the conditions set out in that article for the issue of import permits cannot be met.

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the implications of the unilateral ban on ivory imports for the terms of the CITES convention which regulates and controls the legitimate trade in ivory.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Article XIV of the convention indicates that the provisions of the convention shall not affect the right of parties to adopt stricter domestic measures. The action that we have taken is entirely compatible with the provisions of the convention.

Housing Waiting Lists

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households were housed from the waiting list and by which category in each local authority in England and Wales in 1988.

Mr. Trippier: Local authorities report the number of dwellings let on secure tenancies to households under normal waiting list allocation procedures on their annual housing investment programme returns. The figures for 1987-88 appear in column E9c of the "198 HIP1 All Items Print", a copy of which is in the Library. Information on categories is not held centrally.

For corresponding information about Welsh authorities I refer the hon. Member to the Secretary of State for Wales.

Housing (Voluntary Agencies)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will announce the continuation of funding to voluntary agencies in the housing field under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment hopes to make an announcement soon.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the funding of voluntary organisations by the statutory sector in the field of housing.

Mr. Trippier: Our policy is that voluntary organisations in the shape of housing associations have a major role to play in the future, as providers of housing, and should be supported by Government and local authorities, with important contributions from private funding.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the role that voluntary housing organisations should play in relation to statutory housing services.

Mr. Trippier: Housing associations should in future be the major providers of social rented housing, supported by public and private funds, and co-operating fully with local housing authorities.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the service provided by those organisations in receipt of funding under section 16 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986 and under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985; and what are his concerns in each case with which he is not satisfied.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has been reviewing the section 73 grant regime; we hope to announce conclusions soon. A review of section 16 grants in relation to housing management training is now under way and we shall be consulting interested bodies.

Sewage Discharges

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the establishments that have applied for consent to discharge sewage in excess of the levels set in the Control of Pollution Act 1974 following the privatisation of water authorities.

Mr. Howard: Consents for discharges from sewage treatment works by water authorities are issued by the Secretary of State under the Control of Pollution Act 1974. The Act itself does not set permissible levels of discharge. Lists of sewage treatment works for which applications have been made for time-limited discharge consents, pending completion of capital improvement schemes, have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Harwell Incinerator (Closure)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the closure of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority Harwell laboratory incinerator has posed any disposal problems for slightly radioactive organic solvents used in scintillation counting.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The closure of the Harwell incinerator has not posed any disposal problems. Slightly radioactive solvents are now disposed of in other incinerators authorised under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960.

Environmental Monitoring

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution intends to publish reports on the results obtained from monitoring private water supplies for radioactivity;

(2) when he expects Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to publish its first annual report on the national programme of environmental monitoring in the vicinity of selected premises controlled under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The inspectorate intends to publish the reports by the end of this year.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all sites of special scientific interest presently renotified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in England and Wales on a county by county basis.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Nature Conservancy Council is currently preparing an up-to-date list of SSSIs in England and Wales. I will write to the hon. Member

with this information as soon as it is available, and will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Sizewell C

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had recently on the case for a public inquiry into the Central Electricity Generating Board proposal to build Sizewell C in Suffolk; and whether he now intends to order such an inquiry.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has received one letter from a member of the public which was forwarded to the Department of Energy for a reply. As far as a public inquiry is concerned, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given earlier today by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy.

Community Charge

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which of his Department's community charge practice notes were designed to assist registration officers in the compilation of the registration form; and on what dates each was dispatched to local authorities.

Mr. Gummer: The following five practice notes have been issued to local authorities about various aspects of the task of compiling their community charges register:

Date of issue	*Title*
26 August 1988	Practice Note No. 3: The Community Charges Register
26 August 1988	Practice Note No. 4: Data Protection and the Community Charge (Volumn 1)
14 October 1988	Practice Note No. 6: Omission of Names from the Public Extract of the Register
11 November 1988	Practice Note No. 8: The Community Charge Canvass
1 February 1989	Practice Note No. 10: Data Protection and the Community Charge (Volume 2)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to exempt from poll tax young people who are required to remain in secondary education beyond their 18th birthday; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Young people who remain at school after their 18th birthday are exempt from the community charge for as long as their parents are entitled to claim child benefit on their behalf.

Building Regulations

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made with the review of the building regulations.

Mr. Trippier: The first part of the review of the building regulations has been completed and my right hon. Friend has today laid regulations amending the Building Regulations 1985. The main changes concern parts F (Ventilation), G (Hygiene), H (Drainage and Waste Disposal), J (Heat Producing Appliances) and L (Conservation of Fuel and Power). It is intended that the new regulations should come into force on 1 April 1990, to allow time for users to familiarise themselves with the new requirements. Revised approved documents, which provide practical guidance on meeting the requirements, will be published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office later this month, together with a publication produced by the Building Research Establishment on good practice for securing effective thermal insulation in buildings. Proof copies of these documents have been placed in the Library, together with a summary of the changes that have been made. My right hon. Friend has decided not to proceed at present with amendments to the mandatory rules for means of escape in case of fire which were the subject of consultation in December 1988 and the need for these amendments will now be considered as part of the review of part B (Fire). Further consultation papers on this and other outstanding parts of the review will be issued later this year.

Nature Conservancy Council/Countryside Commission

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to review the current organisation of the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The Government are concerned to improve the way we handle the conservation of wild fauna and flora and the countryside. There are great differences between the circumstances and needs of England, Scotland and Wales in this respect. The present organisational arrangements do not match these differing requirements. The Nature Conservancy Council is responsible for nature conservation throughout the whole of Great Britain. The Countryside Commission is responsible for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the countryside in England and Wales, while there is a separate Countryside Commission for Scotland. There are increasing feelings that these arrangements are inefficient, insensitive and mean that conservation issues in both Scotland and Wales are determined with too little regard for the particular requirements in these countries.

We have therefore concluded that the functions which the Nature Conservancy Council at present exercises throughout Great Britain and the functions which the Countryside Commission exercises in England and Wales should be exercised in future by separate bodies for England, Scotland and Wales. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales have decided that the nature conservation and countryside functions should be the responsibility of a single body in each country. They are making parallel statements about their detailed plans today. The Government believe that combining these responsibilities in one body for Scotland and one for Wales will allow a more comprehensive approach to pursuing the special inheritances of wildlife and natural beauty in these two countries.

We have also considered what would be best for England. In view of the much greater density of population and consequent pressure upon the land, we believe that it would be right to maintain the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission as separate bodies in England.

I shall continue to be responsible for representing the United Kingdom's interests on nature conservation matters within the European Community and under

international conventions. Arrangements will be made for all the necessary advice to continue to be available to me for that purpose.

These changes require legislation, which we shall bring forward at the earliest opportunity, and which will be confined to organisational matters.

I should like to pay a warm tribute to the manifest achievements of the chairmen, members and staff of the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission. We have the most comprehensive administrative arrangements for dealing with wildlife and countryside issues anywhere in the European Community, and perhaps the world. It has become clear that these arrangements will be even more effective if they can take more account of differences in local conditions between different parts of Great Britain. These proposals will achieve that.

"Releasing Enterprise"

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to issue further policy guidance about planning agreements, as envisaged in the White Paper "Releasing Enterprise."

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Wales have today issued a consultation paper seeking views on proposals to amend section 52 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 and on draft guidance to local authorities about the proper limits of their statutory development control powers.

The three proposed legislative changes are: to enable a developer to give a unilateral undertaking to carry out certain works or to do whatever the undertaking specifies; to make provision for a planning agreement or unilateral undertaking to be discharged when its planning purpose has ceased; to enable the Crown to enter into section 52 agreements.

The proposed draft guidance substantially reaffirms, with some amendments, the guidance given in this Department's circular 22/83. (Welsh Office Circular 46/83.)

Barkby Thorpe Road, Leicester

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received opposing the development of the landfill site on Barkby Thorpe road, Leicester.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 11 July 1989]:* Leicester city council has given outline planning permission for the site, subject to a number of conditions. Several representations have been received, including those from the hon. Member for Leicester, East.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions over the past 10 years judicial reviews have been sought to change a decision on a town and country planning appeal determination; and in how many of these cases the review has led to a change in determination.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer, 10 July 1989]:* The chief planning inspector's annual reports, copies of which are in the Library, include tables for England and for Wales showing the number of High Court challenges from 1981 to 1987-88 to different kinds of appeal decision and their outcome. In relation to appeals under sections 36 or 37 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, in 1986-87 the original decision was reversed in 14 out of 27 inspectors' cases redetermined; in 1987-88 eight out of 18 such decisions were reversed. Similar information is not available for the outcome of the redetermination of appeals decided by my right hon. Friend, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Plastic Waste

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of the Environment whether he is satisfied that adequate advice is available to the general public on the preferable means of disposal of the various types of plastic waste other than by burning; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 7 July 1989]:* The Government are concerned to ensure the highest possible standards in the management of waste. Our proposed new environmental legislation will have the effect of further improving these standards. All producers and holders of waste, except private households, will be placed under a statutory duty to take reasonable steps to ensure the legal disposal or reclamation of their waste. A code of practice will be issued together with technical advice on how to meet this duty. Most domestic plastic waste is put out for collection with other domestic waste. Its safe disposal is the responsibility of the disposal authority. The Government support a number of experimental schemes, for example in Sheffield, designed to evaluate the feasibility of recycling domestic plastic waste. We hope that these will demonstrate ways of overcoming the problems associated with recycling this material. Appropriate advice is offered to those concerned. The Government also support Waste Watch, which provides advice to industry and voluntary organisations on all aspects of recycling. These initiatives have resulted in industry recycling an increasing proportion of its own plastic waste.

Light Bulbs

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to commission the building research establishment to evaluate the energy savings that could be achieved in installing energy efficient light bulbs in differing sectors of the economy.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has instituted programmes at the Building Research Establishment to promote all aspects of energy efficiency in buildings, including energy-efficient light bulbs, in differing sectors of the economy.

The work will draw on research on the performance of lighting systems carried out by the establishment on behalf of the Property Services Agency and the construction industry directorate. Cost-effective applications will also be promoted, to ensure widespread take-up, through the energy efficiency demonstration scheme and through the best practice programme of the Energy Efficiency Office of the Department of Energy.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has recently received from Cleveland on toxic waste incinerators.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Secretary of State for the Environment has received several individual letters and a number of pre-printed letters from members of the public residing in Cleveland. Twelve letters have also been received from several hon. Members on behalf of constituents about the proposed siting of industrial and special waste incinerators.

DEFENCE

Universities (Defence Research)

16. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will indicate the current amount of research work his Department is financing at British universities *(a)* in total and *(b)* into the development of nuclear weapons; and what percentage increase that represents over the last five years.

34. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will indicate the current amount of research work his Department is financing at British universities *(a)* in total and *(b)* into the development of nuclear weapons; and what percentage increase that represents over the past five years.

80. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will indicate the current amount of research work his Department is financing at British universities *(a)* in total and *(b)* into the development of nuclear weapons; and what percentage increase that represents over the last five years.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department currently has 690 research agreements and contracts with United Kingdom universities and other institutions of higher education, with a total value of some £55 million, of which the Atomic Weapons Establishment has 40 with a total value of some £2 million. In real terms, from 1985-86 to 1989-90, total annual spending on these arrangements has increased by 6 per cent. and the Atomic Weapons Establishment's element by 9 per cent.

Low Flying

17. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum height for NATO warplanes overflying the south-west on exercise; whether he will reduce the number of these flights overflying from outside the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on his policy on low-level flying over centres of population.

Mr. Neubert: NATO aircraft authorised to conduct low flying training in the United Kingdom are required to follow United Kingdom low-flying regulations which stipulate a normal minimum separation distance of 250 ft. Low flying by non-RAF aircraft based outside the United Kingdom accounts for under 2 per cent. of total low flying activity in the United Kingdom and will continue to be kept under close review. Military pilots are instructed to avoid overflying the centres of major conurbations and built-up areas at low level. It is not possible to avoid overflying the outskirts of major towns or every small community, but pilots will make every effort to avoid populated areas wherever possible.

33. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list exercises involving low-flying aircraft between July and October 1989.

Mr. Neubert: Low flying exercise activity in 1989 is expected to be similar to that in previous years. I will, as is usual, seek to notify members whose constituencies are likely to be affected, prior to individual exercises taking place and as soon as detailed planning permits.

Maritime Strategy

18. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about maritime strategy.

21. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about maritime strategy.

91. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about maritime strategy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend regularly holds discussions with the United States Secretary of Defence on a wide range of matters of mutual interest. However, it is not our general practice to disclose the details of such discussions.

Nuclear Depth Bombs

19. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent consideration he has given to providing the Royal Navy with a new generation of nuclear depth bombs.

23. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent consideration he has given to providing the Royal Navy with a new generation of nuclear depth bombs.

29. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent consideration he has given to providing the Royal Navy with a new generation of nuclear depth bombs.

84. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent consideration he has given to providing the Royal Navy with a new generation of nuclear depth bombs.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As part of the studies related to modernising the United Kingdom's theatre nuclear weapons capability, consideration is being given to the replacement of the full spectrum of United Kingdom tactical nuclear weapons, including sea-based systems. However, no decisions have yet been taken.

F111 Aircraft

20. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about the deployment of F111s in the United Kingdom.

45. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about the deployment of F111s in the United Kingdom.

57. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about the deployment of F111s in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend is currently on an official visit to the United States of America, where he will meet Mr. Cheney and discuss a range of issues of mutual interest.

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the safety records of the F111E and the F111A aircraft based at RAF Upper Heyford.

Mr. Neubert *[pursuant to his reply, 5 July 1989, c. 155]:* In addition to the accident in 1984, there were two other accidents in the 1980s involving F111E aircraft from RAF Upper Heyford. The details of these are as follows. In April 1980 there was an accident to an F111E near Wimborne in Dorset while en route to France, and in March 1981 an F111E was involved in an aborted take-off at RAF Fairford. The latter was an airfield accident to an aircraft which had diverted from Upper Heyford. Although there was considerable damage to the aircraft, there was no danger to the general public.

Hospitals

12. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the under-utilisation of armed services hospitals.

59. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the under-utilisation of armed services hospitals.

70. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the under-utilisation of armed services hospitals.

94. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the under-utilisation of armed services hospitals.

Mr. Neubert: The utilisation of service hospitals was considered by the Public Accounts Committee in its 9th report of the 1987-88 Session. The Government replied in a Treasury Minute in February 1989. The Committee's 21st report of the 1988-89 Session, which also deals with service hospitals, was published on 22 June. It contains further observations which are now being considered and will be answered by Treasury Minute.

Chemical Weapons

22. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has as to the current size of the Soviet Union stockpile of chemical weapons; and what proportion of such weapons he estimated are stationed in eastern Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to page 9 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989 (Cm 675-I). We believe the size of the Soviet stockpile of chemical weapons to be several times higher than the 50,000 tonnes that the Soviets have claimed. We also have good grounds for believing that the Soviet Union has stationed chemical weapons in eastern Europe, but I am unable to say what proportion of the total Soviet stockpile these might currently comprise.

Gurkhas

24. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about the future role of the Gurkhas.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said in the House on 22 May, it is expected that the future Gurkha force will have roles that lie within the mainstream of the Army's defence commitments.

Reserve Forces

25. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the number of men and women recruited for the reserve forces during the past year.

Mr. Neubert: During the training year 1988-89 a total of 19,345 men and 3,108 women were recruited into the volunteer reserve forces.

Demography

26. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further steps he will take to deal with the effects upon the armed forces of the demographic reduction in youth in the 1990s.

81. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further steps he will take to deal with the effects upon the armed forces of the demographic reduction in youth of the 1990s.

87. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further steps he will take to deal with the effects upon the armed forces of the demographic reduction in youth in the 1990s.

Mr. Neubert: I have nothing to add to the information contained in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989 (Cmnd 675-I).

Salisbury Plain

27. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about his policy on conservation and archaeology in the Salisbury plain training area.

Mr. Neubert: I refer my hon. Friend to recent Statements on the Defence Estimates, which confirm the considerable importance that we attach to conservation and archaeology. This applies on Salisbury plain, as elsewhere on the defence estate.

Royal Ordnance Factories

28. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy that, following the closure of royal ordnance factories, he will take steps to ensure that defence materials formerly produced by them continue to be produced from within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: In considering alternative sources of production, we take into account the needs of an efficient defence industry and the value of continuing production within the United Kingdom, but we purchase from overseas when the advantages of cost, performance and timescale outweigh the benefits of procuring a British alternative.

32. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his most recent calculation of the difference between the sale price and current market value of the sale of royal ordnance factories, land and patent rights.

40. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his most recent calculation of the difference between the sale price and current market value of the sale of royal ordnance factories, land and patent rights.

63. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his most recent calculation of the difference between the sale price and current market value of the sale of royal ordnance factories, land and patent rights.

77. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his most recent calculation of the difference between the sale price and current market value of the sale of royal ordnance factories, land and patent rights.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department has had no reason to attempt to calculate the current market value of the assets of Royal Ordnance plc since the company was sold in April 1987. Royal Ordnance plc was sold as an entity, with all its liabilities as well as its assets for £190 million to the highest bidder in keen and open competition. There was therefore no sale price for any of the assets of the company.

The National Audit Office, for its recent report on the sale of Royal Ordnance plc, commissioned surveyors to carry out an alternative use valuation of the three company sites (Enfield, Waltham Abbey and Patricroft) for which there have been highly speculative and exaggerated estimates of development value. The assessment of the current market value of the three sites prepared for the NAO was between £26 million and £38·5 million.

Army Manpower

30. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about Army manpower levels.

Mr. Neubert: On 30 April 1989 the Army was about 3,500 below strength. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces made a statement to the House on 8 June, column *388*, about the measures that the Army was taking to improve recruitment and retention.

Air-to-Surface Missiles

31. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about the provision of a tactical air-to-surface missile.

47. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about the provision of a tactical air-to-surface missile.

73. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about the provision of a tactical air-to-surface missile.

89. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about the provision of a tactical air-to-surface missile.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend is currently on an official visit to the United States of America, where he will meet Mr. Cheney and discuss a range of issues of mutual interest.

Army Trucks

35. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce which company has won the order for new military trucks for the Army; and if he will make statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) on 29 June 1989 at columns *531-32*.

Force Reductions

36. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the defence implications of reductions in *(a)* conventional forces and *(b)* short-range nuclear forces.

60. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the defence implications of reductions in *(a)* conventional forces and *(b)* short-range nuclear forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith).

Warsaw Pact

37. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received any recent evidence to suggest that the Warsaw pact forces are adopting a defensive rather than an offensive strategy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The military reductions and restructuring of forces along defensive lines recently announced by Warsaw pact states have, of course, only just begun to be implemented. They are due to be completed by the end of 1990. Although they will to some extent reduce Warsaw pact offensive capability, we will not be able to judge their full impact until then. However, in terms of fielded capability, the Warsaw pact would still possess a significant advantage over NATO in all the systems needed to conduct conventional operations deep into an enemy's territory.

Defence Exports Services Organisation

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will indicate the annual salary of the head of the defence exports services organisation and the extent of the bonuses for which he could be eligible.

38. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will indicate the annual salary of the head of the defence exports services organisation and the extent of the bonuses for which he could be eligible.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on 6 July 1989, col. *260-61*.

Armed Forces (Recruitment)

39. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many recruits were taken into the armed forces over the last three years for which figures are available; and what are the projections for the next three years.

Mr. Neubert: The number of men and women recruited into the armed forces from civilian life in each of the last three financial years was:

	Number
1986-87	34,049
1987-88	33,826
1988-89	33,863

While the services do project recruiting achievement for planning purposes, the figures are necessarily very tentative and it would not be appropriate to make them public.

79. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people were recruited into the armed services and how many left the armed services during 1988.

Mr. Neubert: During the financial year 1988-89, 33,863 men and women entered the armed forces from civilian life and 39,278 service men and women left the armed forces.

Northern Ireland

41. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to introduce changes in the terms and conditions upon which members of the armed services serve in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Neubert: SDE 89 explained that it is the Government's aim to ensure that terms and conditions of service remain relevant to modern conditions. Against this objective, terms and conditions of service, including those relevant to Northern Ireland, are kept under review. However, I am able to offer an assurance that there are no plans to remove the existing waivers of food and accommodation charges which apply in Northern Ireland.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

42. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the implications for British defence policy of the current extent of countries accepting the principle and practice of nuclear non-proliferation.

49. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the implications for British defence policy of the current extent of countries accepting the principle and practice of non-proliferation.

58. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the implications for British defence policy of the current extent of countries accepting the principle and practice of nuclear non-proliferation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer).

Sea Systems Control Staff

43. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what study has been made of staff savings due to the colocation of sea systems controllerate staff; and what notional saving in staff has been used to justify the costs of relocating over 1,000 Ministry of Defence personnel.

Mr. Sainsbury: The organisation of the sea systems controllerate has been subject to several recent major studies, including by the Ministry of Defence's manpower auditors, which concluded that significant economies in working efficiency could be achieved by a reorganisation on abovewater and underwater ship systems lines coupled with colocation of the dispersed project staffs. Colocation would lead to efficiency savings from fundamental changes in working practices. These savings are expected to amount to at least 10 per cent. of the manpower requirement of the sea systems controllerate. In the initial investment appraisal of colocation carried out last year, the consequent saving of 460 posts was valued at £8·1 million per annum.

Air Safety

69. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the comparability of air safety for United Kingdom forces and those of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies.

44. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the comparability of air safety for United Kingdom forces and those of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies.

75. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the comparability of air safety for United Kingdom forces and those of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies.

Mr. Neubert: The air safety record of United Kingdom forces is broadly comparable with those of other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces operating similar equipment.

Nuclear Tests (Compensation)

46. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has yet been able to assess the implications for his policy on compensation arrangements to United Kingdom ex-service men and their families who were nuclear test victims of the recent decision in the Australian courts.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. The court in Australia has yet to make available the judgment, and consequently we cannot say at present what implications, if any, there might be for British participants in the United Kingdom nuclear test programme.

Surplus Property

48. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on the disposal of Ministry of Defence quarters which are found to be surplus to requirements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: It is our policy not to retain quarters for which we have no long-term requirement. Wherever

possible surplus properties will be offered for sale, either to service personnel through the services' own discount scheme or on the open market at full market price, if the quarters are not suitable for individual sale through this scheme. Quarters which cannot be sold, for example because of their location, may be reappropriated for other defence purposes or demolished.

Nuclear Free-fall Bombs

50. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about progress on the replacement of the WE177 nuclear bomb.

54. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on his policy towards the replacement of the nuclear free-fall bombs.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are still studying a number of procurement options for possible replacement of the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb, but no decisions have yet been taken.

Nuclear Test Bans

51. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what would be the implications for United Kingdom nuclear forces of a *(a)* partial and *(b)* total nuclear test ban.

55. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what would be the implications for United Kingdom nuclear forces of a *(a)* partial and *(b)* total nuclear test ban.

61. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what would be the implications for United Kingdom nuclear forces of a *(a)* partial and *(b)* total nuclear test ban.

72. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what would be the implications for United Kingdom nuclear forces of a *(a)* partial and *(b)* total nuclear test ban.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since 1963, the United Kingdom has been a party to the partial test ban treaty, which prohibits nuclear tests in all environments except underground. As was made clear in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989 (Cm. 675-I, paragraph 217), a comprehensive test ban remains a long-term goal. For the foreseeable future, however, our security will depend on deterrence, based on nuclear weapons. We must, therefore, continue to test our nuclear weapons to ensure that they remain effective and up-to-date.

NATO

52. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to meet the Supreme Allied Commander Europe to discuss the defence requirements of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend will meet SACEUR at the meeting of NATO's Nuclear Planning Group in the autumn.

95. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to meet the secretary general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Frend will meet Dr. Woerner at the Royal Tournament on 20 July.

66. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will next have meetings with Defence Ministers of other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend will have a number of opportunities for discussion with NATO colleagues over the coming months. The next NATO ministerial meeting will be at the Nuclear Planning Group in the autumn, when Ministers will discuss a range of issues of mutual interest.

Chemical and Biological Weapons

53. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the United States stockpile of chemical and biological weapons *(a)* currently and *(b)* over the next five years.

85. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the United States stockpile of chemical and biological weapons *(a)* currently and *(b)* over the next five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott).

Cancer Clusters

56. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations his Department has had about cancer clusters around nuclear installations for which he is responsible.

71. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations his Department has had about cancer clusters around nuclear installations for which he is responsible.

76. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations his Department has had about cancer clusters around nuclear installations for which he is responsible.

78. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations his Department has had about cancer clusters around nuclear installations for which he is responsible.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am not aware of any recent representation to my Department on this matter.

Out-of-area Commitments

62. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the United Kingdom's defence budget is currently spent on out-of-area commitments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The estimated cost in 1989-90 of maintaining our overseas commitments in Belize, Cyprus, the Falkland Islands and Hong Kong is £243 million, which represents 1·2 per cent. of the defence budget. This figure includes directly attributable expenditure on capital works and equipment and on running costs for material and manpower. It is not possible to provide directly attributable costs for the Armilla patrol since financial provision is made for the operation of the fleet as a whole.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many animal experiments for warfare testing purposes his Department has been directly responsible for in the last full year for which figures are available.

64. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many animal experiments for warfare testing purposes his Department has been directly responsible for in the last full year for which figures are available.

65. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many animal experiments for warfare testing purposes his Department has been directly responsible for in the last full year for which figures are available.

93. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many animal experiments for warfare testing purposes his Department has been directly responsible for in the last full year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry of Defence does not conduct experiments for warfare testing purposes with live animals. Live animals are not used in the development or testing of weapons, but only to develop protective measures against attack and to improve the treatment of injuries. The Ministry of Defence complies fully with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, and the figure recorded under the Act by the Home Office for 1987, the last full year for which figures are available, was 9,200. This represents less than one half of 1 per cent. of all animal experiments conducted in the United Kingdom.

AWACS Offset Agreement

67. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made by his Department in monitoring the number of jobs involved in contracts placed under the AWACS offset agreement.

83. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made by his Department in monitoring the number of jobs involved in contracts placed under the AWACS offset agreement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse).

Dog Training

68. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made with his consideration of the report of the consultants into the future of dog training at the Royal Army Veterinary Corps, Melton Mowbray; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: The Peat Marwick McLintock study into future arrangements for canine and equine-related training in the services has recommended that the Ministry of Defence should vacate and sell the land at Melton Mowbray currently occupied by the RAVC and set up a service animal centre at RAF Syerston, encompassing canine and equine-related training, and allied functions, and using RAF Newton for administrative/domestic support. I am minded to accept the recommendation that a service animal centre should be formed embracing the existing separate service establishments.

The choice of site may, however, be affected by a current study into the future of the whole RAF estate including RAF Newton and RAF Syerston. In any event, as a result of the Peat Marwick McLintock study, some land at Melton Mowbray has been identified for disposal, whether or not the service animal centre is established there. We shall be exploring the possibility of the development of the site with the local planning authority. An announcement on the long-term location of the service animal centre will be made as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, we are implementing other recommendations made by the consultants concerning the common adoption of best practices, in preparation for the formation of the joint centre. This is expected to save at least £4 million in running costs over the next 10 years. The proposals for the formation of the joint centre are consistent with Government policies on the optimum utilisation of the defence estate, and the introduction of more efficient practices in those areas working in support of the operational capabilities of the armed forces.

Bullying

74. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made with each of the initiatives intended to reduce bullying in the armed forces.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the right hon. Member to the statement I made on 28 June, column 1075. A copy of my letter of 23 June to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), setting out the progress made in implementing the measures, has been placed in the Library.

European Fighter Aircraft

82. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in respect of the radar system for the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett).

Force Verification

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about the defence implications of inspection and verification of United Kingdom forces, and those of other nations in the event of an early agreement to reduce conventional and nuclear forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend regularly discusses arms control matters, including the defence implications of inspection and verification regimes, with Mr. Cheney and will do so during the course of his current visit to the USA.

Helicopters

88. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what low-flying restrictions are imposed on service helicopters.

Mr. Neubert: The general regulations governing the use of the United Kingdom low flying system by fixed-wing aircraft apply also to rotary wing aircraft but with appropriate modifications to take account of their different capabilities.

Railgun

90. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will report on the progress of the Railgun project.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer to the replies that I gave to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neil) on 28 June, at column *456*.

Independent European Programme Group

92. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made through the Independent European Programme Group in achieving a more open defence market among North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies.

Mr. Sainsbury: Significant progress is being made by the Independent European Programme Group towards the creation of an open European defence equipment market, based on measures set out in the action plan approved by Ministers at the Luxembourg meeting in November 1988. At their subsequent meeting in Lisbon on 28 June this year, Ministers reviewed the steps being taken to achieve the key objectives. The central feature of the open market is the dissemination to potential suppliers of information about bidding opportunities. To this end, Governments have now nominated one or more focal points to which companies in other Independent European Programme Group countries can register interest in bidding for defence contracts. Countries have also agreed to publish contracts bulletins by the turn of the year. The bulletins will be similar to those already issued by the United Kingdom and France. This more open market will bring benefits to all participating states. It will also be of considerable value to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation as a whole by enhancing efficient procurement and thereby strengthening the European contribution to the Alliance. With this in mind the Independent European Programme Group will continue to discourage any protectionist tendencies on either side of the Atlantic. Another important initiative which complements the open market is the creation of a European technology plan—to be known as Euclid—which will foster co-operation in research among Independent European Programme Group nations. During its current chairmanship of the Independent European Programme Group, the United Kingdom's aim will be to ensure that the work of the group is taken forward effectively in the best interests of all the allies.

Toxic Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), *Official Report*, 19 June, column *60*, on toxic waste at Ministry of Defence premises, he will give the reason why it is not the practice to release details of such materials; and if he will consider revising his policy towards publication in line with the practice adopted by United States military facilities.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the basis for his policy not to disclose details of radioactive and toxic waste stored or disposed of at Ministry of Defence premises.

Mr. Sainsbury: Disclosure of such information could indicate the scale and nature of operations in certain programmes on which detailed revelation would not be in the national interest.

Fuel Containers (Devon)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which two 10ft x 2ft fuel containers were dropped at Stowford Cross in North Devon on Thursday 29 June; and what steps he is taking to prevent this happening in the future.

Mr. Neubert: The fuel containers in question were jettisoned by a Royal Navy Sea Harrier operating from the Royal Naval air station at Yeovilton, while the aircraft was on an air combat training exercise. The aircraft unintentionally went into a spin and the pilot, following the correct procedures, released the fuel tanks as part of his spin recovery action. The fuel tanks were empty at the time. A local investigation has established that the pilot was not in breach of any regulations.

To minimise the risk to the public, air combat training is carried out over the least populated areas available and always well away from towns and cities. It is also very rare for a Sea Harrier to enter into a spin in this way. The risk therefore of a repetition of this incident or of any consequent injury to persons on the ground is considered to be remote.

Cereal Fields

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in the inquiries initiated by Army helicopters based in the south-west in investigating the origin of flattened circular areas of wheat; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: The Ministry of Defence is not conducting any inquiries into the origins of flattened circular areas of crops. However, we are satisfied that they are not caused by service helicopter activity.

Service Children Education Authority

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many children currently attend schools run by the service children education authority in *(a)* north-west Europe, *(b)* Gibraltar, *(c)* Hong Kong, *(d)* Cyprus and *(e)* elsewhere.

Mr. Neubert: Figures at summer term 1989:

	Number
North West Europe	23,880
Gibraltar	679
Hong Kong	1,610
Cyprus	1,655
Elsewhere	163
TOTAL	27,987

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many teachers are employed in schools run by the service children education authority.

Mr. Neubert: Figures are for summer term 1989:

	Number
North West Europe	1,319
Gibraltar	38
Hong Kong	108
Cyprus	122
Elsewhere	11
TOTAL	1,598

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the members of the service children education authority.

Mr. Neubert: Controller of the service children education authority (SCEA) is a tri-service rotational appointment currently filled by a Royal Air Force group captain of the administrative branch (education specialisation). There are three deputy controller appointments, currently filled by a Commander RN, a lieutenant colonel RAEC, and a civil servant, senior executive officer. The three deputy controllers are between them responsible for SCEA sections each headed by a major (or service-civilian equivalent), and staffed mainly by civil servants. The total complement of SCEA headquarters is currently 30 personnel.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the relationship between the service children education authority and Hampshire county council.

Mr. Neubert: Hampshire local education authority is one of a number of authorities represented on the standing committee for the education of service children (UK), chaired by controller SCEA. SCEA purchases from Hampshire local education authority, among other sources, a range of advisory support services for service children's schools (SCS) overseas. This includes careers guidance, which is provided by local education authority careers officers visiting overseas schools. In addition SCEA buys in Hampshire local education authority advisory time for both primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether schools run overseas by the service children education authority are subject to inspection by Her Majesty's inspectors operating from the Department of Education and Science; and whether the inspectors' reports are published.

Mr. Neubert: Yes.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether work experience programmes are available to children in north-west Europe attending schools run by the service children education authority.

Mr. Neubert: Yes. Work experience in north-west Europe is normally organised for 4th-year children (age 14 to 15) in two-week blocks usually during the summer term. Fifteen to 16-year-old children who are following CPVE (Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education) also have a short period of work experience.

IUKADGE Command and Control System

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to publish his assessment of the independent audit of the IUKADGE command and control system.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. Both the independent audit of the IUKADGE command and control system and the Ministry of Defence's subsequent assessment of its report will contain information that is both classified and commercially sensitive.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date were all of the elements of the IUKADGE command and control system originally intended to be in service use, and when the system was first ordered.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not our practice, nor has it been the practice of previous Governments, to release planned in-service dates of defence equipment.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the differences between the operational capabilities of the IUKADGE command and control system that is currently on order and the system that it is due to replace.

Mr. Sainsbury: When the IUKADGE is fully functioning, the CCS will be the focus of the management of all air defence resources, including early warning and reaction systems. Information on its specific operational capabilities is, however, classified.

Single Software Language

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the current rules of NATO international competitive bidding now allow the specification of a single software language.

Mr. Sainsbury: ADA is now NATO's single preferred language standard for real-time defence computer applications. According to the present rules for NATO international competitive bidding, the use of ADA for such applications is strongly recommended although not mandatory.

Berthing Facilities (East Coast)

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many east coast ports adopt a policy of refusing berthing and bunkering facilities to Royal Navy ships.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Royal Navy has not encountered any ports which adopt such a policy.

RAF Upper Heyford

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all accidents or potentially hazardous incidents involving aircraft flying from RAF Upper Heyford while the base has been under the operational control of the United States Air Force.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 7 July 1989]:* Since 1970, the period for which records are readily available, there have been 14 accidents to aircraft from the 20th tactical fighter wing based at RAF Upper Heyford. These accidents all took place during training exercises well away from the base. The dates and locations of the accidents are as listed:

Date	*Aircraft*	*Area*
28 May 1970	F-100	The Wash
18 January 1972	F-111E	Leuchars, Scotland
11 January 1973	F-111E	West of Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire

Date	Aircraft	Area
15 May 1973	F-111E	Kintyre, Scotland
5 March 1975	F-111E	Cumbrian Mountains
5 November 1975	F-111E	Wainfleet range, Lincolnshire
31 October 1977	F-111E	4 miles North West of Llangadfan
24 July 1979	F-111E	North Sea near Wetherset
30 October 1979	F-111E	Harlton, Cambridgeshire
12 December 1979	F-111E	Wainfleet range, Lincolnshire
12 December 1979	F-111E	Newton Stewart, Scotland
29 April 1980	F-111E	Wimborne, Dorset
13 March 1981	F-111E	RAF Fairford
9 August 1984	F-111E	Tain range, Scotland

It is not the practice of the United States Air Force to classify incidents as "potentially hazardous".

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 12 July 1989

DEFENCE

Battle Tanks

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards dismantling and storing battle tanks as part of conventional force reductions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As regards dismantling, I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 17 of the declaration of the heads of state and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels, 29 to 30 May 1989, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. This proposes that all equipment withdrawn under a CFE agreement should be destroyed. In addition, the Alliance proposals make provision for certain assets to be held in store. Detailed provisions on how both these aspects should be carried out have yet to be tabled.

Independent European Programme Group

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the Independent European Programme Group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) on 11 July.

Fighting Ships

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies his Department has carried out into the use of front wheel drive propulsion for fighting ships; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Department keeps under review a variety of warship propulsion techniques, including forward facing propulsors and bow mounted propellers; the latter, however, appear to have a number of disadvantages over conventional arrangements.

HMS Southampton

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the award of a contract for the repair and refit of HMS Southampton.

Mr. Sainsbury: A firm price contract has been placed today with Swan Hunter Shipbuilders. I would wish to pay tribute to the quality of the tenders we have received, which fully justifies our decision to seek competition. Together with parallel contracts for replacement equipment, and other costs, the full cost of the repair and refit will be some £45 million.

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to reach a decision on the allocation of work to the FMRO Portsmouth following the removal of HMS Southampton from the FMRO programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have agreed a package of additional work to cover the remainder of this financial year. Details are being made known locally. Any further changes will depend on the outcome of the longer term studies into the future of the FMRO which I hope to announce shortly.

SOCIAL SECURITY

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the effect on the contribution income of the national insurance fund for 1989-90 if average earnings rose between 1988-89 and 1989-90 by 10 per cent. instead of the 7¼ per cent. in the Government Actuary's report on the 1988 Uprating Order (Cm. 537).

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government Actuary's report on the 1988 Uprating Order estimated that contribution income to the National Insurance Fund in 1989-90 would be £28·1 billion. If it had then been assumed that earnings would increase in 1989-90 by 10 per cent. then the national insurance fund's estimated income from contributions would have been £28·7 billion.

This report was prepared before the changes to national insurance contributions announced in the Budget. Taking these changes into account the national insurance fund's estimated income would have been £28·5 billion in 1989-90 assuming a 10 per cent. increase in earnings. The increased take-up of personal pensions will reduce this estimated income by about £2 billion.

Pensioners

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when income support applicable amounts are increased in October 1989 how many *(a)* single pensioners and *(b)* pensioner couples on income support will receive an increase in weekly benefit of the same or less than the transitional addition awarded to them in April 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The estimates are:

(a) 100,000
(b) 20,000

The increases for income support recipients in October will be paid on top of any transitional additions.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* single pensioners and *(b)* pensioner couples will become newly entitled to income support when the applicable amounts are raised in October.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We estimate that 40,000 single pensioners and 20,000 pensioner couples will become new recipients of income support in October.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioner couples in receipt of income support will receive an increase in benefit of £3·50 a week when the applicable amount is increased in October.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: An estimated 140,000.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many single pensioners in receipt of income support will receive an increase in benefit of £2·50 a week when the applicable amount is increased in October.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: An estimated 730,000.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what basis the applicable amounts for single pensioners and pensioner couples were uprated to £2·50 and £3·50, respectively, with effect from October; and what factors were taken into consideration in making this uprating.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 24 November at columns 241-51.

Income Support

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in how many cases income support or housing benefit was reduced in the year April 1988 to April 1989 on the grounds that the claimant had spent more than six weeks in hospital.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information is not available.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to change the basis on which social security benefits are paid to residents of residential care and nursing homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health has today announced that the Government are to make local authorities responsible for meeting the costs of care for residents in residential care and nursing homes who are unable to finance it from their own resources. This is to be implemented in April 1991. From that date I will therefore be making changes to the way the benefit system provides support.

At present income support can be available to help with the fees charged by residential care and nursing homes, subject to specified limits which I review annually. I propose that from April 1991 residents of homes will be given access to help from the normal income support system and from housing benefit on a similar basis to the help they would receive in their own home. The special income support system for those in homes will be ended and local authorities will be responsible for providing any further help required towards the cost of residential care in the cases where they decide that that form of care would be best.

The present system will remain in place until April 1991 for all those who need it. Claimants who are receiving income support in a home at the date of change will continue to receive the full level of help available via income support under current rules for as long as they need it and the system will continue after April 1991 for these cases. The limits will continue to be subject to annual review. The Government have also decided that other residents of registered residential care and nursing homes in April 1991 will also be eligible for help through the continuation of the existing income support system, should they need to turn to the state for support.

The Government have decided that community care grants should continue to be available from the social fund after April 1991, broadly as they are now. We will keep this under review.

We are not proposing to make any changes to the benefit rules for residents of local authority homes.

Full details of the new system will be published in the White Paper later this year, which will also include the Government's proposals for the calculation of housing benefit in residential care and nursing homes.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Horticultural Research Stations

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the progress of his plans to close horticultural research stations.

Mr. Ryder: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given on 10 July to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) at columns *350-51*.

Farming (Employment)

Mr. Bright: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of how many people now employed in farming may move out of the agricultural industry in the next 10 years; and if he will make a statement on the National Economic Development Office's report "Work in the Countryside", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In view of the crucial assumptions that have to be made in estimating the number of people currently employed in agriculture who are likely to leave the industry in the next 10 years, I have not considered it appropriate to make my own forecast. However, the report of the National Economic Development Council, "Work in the Countryside", provides an interesting insight into the corporate view of a group made up of a wide range of different interests. I am not in a position to judge whether what they term their least and most optimistic assumptions will prove accurate but, in broad terms, their forecast represents a continuation of past trends.

It is an interesting report which, among other things, highlights some of the alternative business opportunities for farmers. I welcome the contribution that the report makes in stimulating debate on the development of new job opportunities in the land base sector. My Department is already pursuing some of the action points mentioned in the report.

Chimpanzees

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has of the infectivity of BSE to chimpanzees.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No research has been carried out or is planned on the transmission of BSE to chimpanzees.

Baby Food

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many brands of baby milk and weaning food contain concentrates of aluminium above 200 microgrammes per litre.

Mr. Ryder: All the brands tested in the recent Ministry programme had levels of aluminium well below the intake maximum recommended by the World Health Organisation. The figure of 200 microgrammes per litre quoted has no significance from the point of view of health.

Food Irradiation

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the development of a diagnostic test to determine whether food has been irradiated; and what are the implications of such a test for his proposals to permit the irradiation of food.

Mr. Ryder: I have nothing to add to my replies of 25 May to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) at column *1109*.

Intervention Board for Agriculture

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many employees of the Intervention Board for Agriculture were employed at Kenton Bar, Newcastle at the end of each of the last 12 months up to 30 June; and, in each case, how many of these were temporary staff.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The board employed the following permanent and temporary staff at Kenton Bar, Newcastle during the last 12 months up to 30 June 1989.

	Permanent	*Temporary*	*Total*
1988			
31 July	0	0	0
31 August	0	0	0
30 September	0	0	0
31 October	0	0	0
30 November	7	45	52
31 December	7	45	52
1989			
31 January	8	55	63
28 February	8	59	67
31 March	9	60	69
30 April	11	64	75
31 May	16	116	132
30 June	15	111	126

ENVIRONMENT

Beaches

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has made to *(a)* Wessex Water or *(b)* South West Water over sewage contamination of beaches; and what steps he is taking to monitor the work of these authorities.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend is currently discussing with the water authorities an accelerated capital programme for identified bathing waters with the aim of bringing them up to the standards of the EC bathing water directive by the mid-1990s.

The National Rivers Authority will be responsible for monitoring and enforcing bathing water quality standards in accordance with the requirements of the directive.

Housing (Durham)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the numbers of local authority housing stock in the area of Durham district council as at April 1979 and at the latest date.

Mr. Trippier: The information for April 1979 and April 1988 was reported by local authorities in their annual housing investment programme returns (HIP1) and appears in columns B11 and A11 of "HIP1 All Items Print" for 1979 and 1988 respectively.

Copies of both documents are in the Library.

Married Couples

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest figure he has for the number of married couples who are living in a household headed by another person nationally and in Durham City constituency.

Mr. Trippier: The most reliable estimates of the number of married couples living in a household headed by another person in local areas are provided by the census of population. The 1981 census identified 140 such families in Durham City. The corresponding figure for England in 1981 is 145,000.

Ivory

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what official announcement was made, and when, regarding the United Kingdom's unilateral ban on ivory imports into the United Kingdom; and what notice was given to the United Kingdom ivory trade.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My noble Friend the Minister for Environment, Housing and Countryside announced on 23 May our intention to call for a complete ban on trade in new ivory at the Environment Council meeting on 8-9 June, and our decision to impose a unilateral ban on ivory imports was announced by my noble Friend at that meeting. A written statement giving further details was issued on 9 June.

Cemeteries

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to amend the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 (S.I., 1977, No. 204), as amended, to require local authorities to give details of the number of burial places available in each grave sold by the authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None. There is no evidence of a widespread need for such a requirement.

Water Privatisation

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much has been set aside by his Department for the water flotation marketing campaign; how much has been allocated for the institutional lunches and dinners; and how much has been allocated for the national and regional roadshows;

(2) what was the cost to his Department of the paper of 9 May on the offer structure for the sale of the water industry, prepared by J. Henry Schroder Wagg & Co. Limited.

Mr. Ridley: It is not our practice to publish details of individual contracts. The cost of the water flotation will be reported to Parliament in due course in the usual way.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the specific prospectuses being prepared for potential foreign investors in the water industry.

Mr. Ridley: As announced in November 1988, the Government and the Water Authorities Association have appointed banking advisers to consider the feasibility and desirability of offering shares in the forthcoming privatisation in Japan, the United States of America, Canada and continental Europe. Firm decisions will not be made until later in the year on whether shares will be offered in any or all of the markets but preparations for such offers are being undertaken on a contingent basis.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reply to the written question by the hon. Member for Norwich, South of 3 February, *Official Report*, column *431*, concerning the sites of special scientific interest in the ownership of the Anglian water authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer, 12 April 1989]:* I wrote to the hon. Member for Norwich, South on 28 June 1989 about this matter.

Quangos

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the appointments he has made since June 1987 to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations together with the salary payable in each case.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* The appointments to public bodies for which I am responsible are shown in the annual HMSO publication "Public Bodies" which gives informaton on the number of these posts and the levels of remuneration. The appointments are made under a variety of arrangements, and my involvement varies.

In addition, I make appointments to the following other bodies:

Architectural Heritage Fund:
Five members—unpaid
National House Building Council:
Chairman unpaid
National Park Planning Board and Committees:
One third of the members—unpaid
Sutton Housing Trust:
Four Trustees—Honorarium
Dartmoor Steering Group:
Chairman (appointed jointly with Secretary of State for Defence)—unpaid
Parliamentary Boundary Commission
One member—unpaid
The Chequers Trust
One Trustee—unpaid

A full list of the particular appointments made since June 1987 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Sea Pollution

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the temporary licences in place earlier in the current year relating to waste discharge, including glycol and anti-corrosion substances from the North sea gas terminal at Bacton in north Norfolk, have been extended; what reassurances have been received from the operators, Shell, Amoco and Phillips, that the discharges constitute no hazard to the environment in general, and sea birds in particular; what action he has taken to test these reassurances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* My right hon. Friend is currently considering requests received under section 36(6)*(b)* of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 to direct the Anglian water authority to transmit to him for his own determination applications for discharge consent made by Amoco (UK) Exploration Co. Ltd. and Phillips Petroleum Co. UK Ltd. These involve discharges of surface water and glycol regenerator condensate to the sea from the gas terminal at Bacton. No temporary consents have been granted to either company; nor have they applied for consent to discharge anti-corrosion substances.

A consent to discharge these substances was issued to Shell UK by the Anglian water authority earlier this year. Regular monitoring by the authority indicates that there is no evidence to suggest that the discharge has had an effect on either the water environment or sea birds.

Community Charge

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice has been sought by, or given to, Solihull district council's community charge registration officer as to the range and scope of the questions on his registration form; what additional funds could be made available for a re-issue of the form following complaints about the questions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* All registration officers in England were given the same advice on registration together with a model form. I have no plans to allocate additional funds to any authority that chose not to comply and which may be required to amend its procedures.

Landfills

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those local authorities in England and Wales that did not respond to the 18 December 1987 letter from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on the licensing and control of landfills evolving gas.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 11 July 1989]:* All waste disposal authorities in England and Wales have responded to the letter sent to them on 18 December 1987 by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals on environmental protection have been made by the United Kingdom ambassador to the United Nations during its 43rd session.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), and the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 6 June, volume 154, column 33.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Single European Market

92. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress was made during the Spanish presidency of the Community towards completion of the single European market.

Mr. Maude: Very considerable progress was made under the Spanish presidency. Over 60 individual single market agreements were reached, which is a record for any one presidency. These included common positions in the Council of Ministers on very important directives to liberalise banking services in the EC and to ensure more effective compliance with EC rules on procedures for the award of public contracts. The presidency also saw the final adoption of several key measures to break down technical barriers to trade, for example in the areas of food law and machine safety.

Debt

Mr. Hood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will take steps to alert people in Scotland to unscrupulous practices used by some finance companies whereby they entrap people into debt and sell the debt off to debt-collecting agencies.

Mr. Maude: I have been asked to reply.

This is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading. If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence of unfair business practices in the marketing of consumer credit, I hope that he will make it available to the director general.

Finance Companies (Interest Rates)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has on the range of interest rates set by licensed finance companies in Scotland.

Mr. Maude: I have been asked to reply.

The Government do not keep information on the ranges of interest rates available from licensed finance companies. Regulations ensure that a prospective borrower under a consumer credit agreement receives clear information on the interest rate being offered and that the information is on a basis which facilitates comparison with other sources of consumer credit.

Student Loans

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if a company established to administer the Government's student top-up loan scheme has been registered at Companies house.

Mr. Maude: The Registrar of Companies is not aware that any company has been incorporated for the purposes of administering the proposed scheme.

Balance of Trade

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the latest balance of trade in manufactured goods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the three months to May 1989, trade in manufactures, on a seasonally adjusted balance of payments basis, was in deficit by £3·8 billion compared with a deficit of £4·3 billion in the previous three months.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total deficit in all trade with the rest of the European Economic Community over the past 12 months; and what was the comparable deficit five and 10 years previously.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table:

United Kingdom visible trade balance[1] with EC[2]

12 months ending	*£ billion*
May 1989	−16·1
May 1984	−4·3
May 1979	−3·1

[1] Imports cif (ie including insurance and freight costs). Exports fob (ie excluding insurance and freight costs).
[2] Present membership throughout.
Source: United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the changes in recent months in United Kingdom statistics of overall trade with other European Community member states; and when he next expects to discuss such matters with the Council of Trade Ministers.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the six months to May, compared with the same period last year, United Kingdom exports to the other EC countries increased by 12 per cent. while those to the rest of the world rose by 9 per cent. Imports from the EC countries increased by about the same amount as those from the rest of the world, 15 per cent.

I have no plans to discuss these figures in the Council of Ministers.

Petrol (Monopolies and Mergers Commission Report)

Mr. Andrew McKay: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to receive the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on petrol retailing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The commission is due to submit its report on the wholesale supply of petrol to my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State by 8 November.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the Kemp report on the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Alan Clark: The report on the future status of ECGD was submitted to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in May 1989. Ministers asked that the report should be published immediately to facilitate consultation with interested parties. This has been done. An inter-departmental working party of officials has been

convened under the chairmanship of the ECGD's chief executive to examine the recommendations in the report and to give advice to Ministers. No decisions have yet been taken on any of the options identified in the report.

Hotol Project

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what initiatives his Department has taken in the last 12 months to promote international participation in the Hotol project.

Mr. Atkins: We have been able to facilitate contacts with the relevant United States authorities. Contacts have also taken place with European industry. This is an industry-led project and it will be for the companies themselves to provide any further information.

Post Office Services

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, in view of the deterioration in the quality of postal services recently documented by the Post Office Users National Council, if the Government will introduce more competition into the postal services.

Mr. Forth: Postal service quality is a matter for the Post Office board. However, I understand that, disregarding last September and Christmas, there has been no significant change in performance over the last year.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what studies have been made of the benefits of disposing of the Post Office Counters to the private sector.

Mr. Forth: I am not aware of any detailed studies on this subject.

Estate Agents

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he intends that the code of practice for estate agents should cover commercial as well as residential estate agents.

Mr. Forth: As I announced on 21 June, the code is to be drawn up by the Director General of Fair Trading and discussed with the industry. It will be for the director general in drawing up a draft code for discussion with the industry to decide whether it should cover commercial as well as residential estate agents. I will ask the director general to write to my hon. Friend on this matter.

Milford Haven Dock Company

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, in the light of the appointment of inspectors to investigate and report on the affairs of the Milford Haven Dock Company under section 432 of the Companies Act 1985, he will make a statement on the proposed acquisition of the company by the Milford Haven port authority.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* No. Any such proposed acquisition is a matter for the parties concerned.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Family Courts

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Stockton, South of 3 July, whether he will give the total number of representations on the subject of family courts received in the last six months, what was the number in favour of the idea, and the number against; and if he will summarise the arguments presented in representations against.

The Attorney-General: As I indicated in my answer to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) of 3 July, precise information about representations to my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor is not readily available as much of the correspondence refers to family courts as one of a number of issues or as an ancillary matter to the main focus of the correspondence. While it is true to say that correspondents generally favour a family court, there are none the less divergences of opinion on the many specific issues comprehended by the concept. Moreover, correspondents often fail to explain what they mean by the phrase in any meaningful detail so that it is not possible to identify what it is that they are in favour of and why.

Conciliation Service

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Stockton, South on 3 July, *Official Report*, column *1*, whether the Lord Chancellor's Department has accepted the costings and staffing levels proposed by the conciliation project unit based at the university of Newcastle upon Tyne; what further consideration is being given to these matters and by whom; to whom copies of the report had been passed for comment; and what response has been made.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor has said that proposals relating to conciliation, including the report of the conciliation project unit at the university of Newcastle, will be considered as part of a rolling programme to review family law and procedures. That review will consider any costing and staffing levels estimated or proposed by the project unit. The Government are considering how that programme should be carried forward and hope to be in a position to make a statement later this year. Although formal comments on the report have not been sought ahead of the review the Lord Chancellor's Department has received comments from Relate, the Inner London probation service, the National Family Conciliation Council and from two individuals engaged in running conciliation schemes.

TRANSPORT

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he proposes to reopen the public inquiry into the east London river crossing to enable it to consider the revised design of the bridge over the Thames.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce a decision about the re-design of the new bridge for the east London river crossing; and why the review which he announced on 28 July 1988 has taken longer than the expected six months.

Mr. Channon: I expect to make an announcement very shortly about the design of the bridge and the next steps. Consultation with the relevant authorities indicated further possibilities which the consultants have been exploring. Their report has therefore taken longer than expected to complete.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of people in prison at the latest available date; and what it was 12 months ago.

Mr. Hurd: On Friday 30 June, 48,638 prisoners were held in prison service establishments in England and Wales. A further 230 prisoners were held in police cells. The total of 48,868 is 1,434 less than the total of 50,302 12 months ago. This is welcome news.

Prevention of Terrorism Act

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of people detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in Liverpool for each year from 1975 to 1989.

Mr. Hurd: The available information relates to detentions by Merseyside police and is published quarterly in Home Office statistical bulletins which are placed in the Library. The latest, issue 17/89, gives in table 3 information from 1979 up to the first quarter of 1989; it is planned to publish the bulletin for the second quarter at the end of this month. Corresponding information for individual years before 1979 is not available but the total detained between 1974 and 1978 is published in issue 11/87.

Disturbances, Bradford and Dewsbury

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of West Yorkshire as to the estimated costs of the police operations during the recent disturbances in Bradford and Dewsbury; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of West Yorkshire that the estimated additional costs of policing the disturbances are £194,250. This covers police officer and civilian overtime, subsistence for police officers, transport and aid from other forces provided under section 14 of the Police Act 1964.

Custody (Compensation)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state for each of the last five years *(a)* the number of people awarded ex gratia compensation for periods in custody and *(b)* the total amount paid in ex gratia compensation.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested, based on the date upon which the final payment of compensation was made, is as follows:

Year	*Number awarded compensation*	*Total amount paid £*
1984	12	14,450
1985	17	216,163
1986	13	154,890
1987	14	153,806
1988	8	56,925

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Chlorofluorocarbons

91. Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the proposal to establish an international fund to compensate developing countries for the cost of phasing out production of chlorofluorocarbons.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have already made it clear that we are willing to help developing countries to find ways of avoiding the use of CFCs. An international fund has been suggested as one means by which such help could be given. The various possible means are to be considered by a working group, established by the parties to the Montreal protocol at their meeting in May, which is to start work next month.

Nicaragua

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the grounds for rejection of Oxfam's application under the Overseas Development Administration joint funding scheme for aid with the following Nicaraguan projects: *(a)* the Atlantic coast livestock loan scheme, *(b)* the Fanor Urroz co-operative farm and *(c)* CISAS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: All three project applications were rejected after the usual consultations. Oxfam has asked us to reconsider projects *(a)* and *(b)* and we have agreed to do so.

EC Budget

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for each of the years 1979 to 1987 *(a)* the total amount of expenditure under line 941 of the Community budget, *(b)* the amount granted to United Kingdom non-governmental organisations under line 941 of the Community budget, and *(c)* the percentage that *(b)* represents of *(a)*.

Mr. Chris Patten: Figures in the precise form requested are not readily available. Figures for 1986, 1987 and for the period 1976 to 1987 are as follows:

	Total commitments £ million	*To United Kingdom NGOs £ million*	*Percentage share United Kingdom NGOs Per cent.*
1986	31·418	6·120	19·5
1987	43·906	8·086	18·4
1976-87	205·805	38·9	18·9

Note: All calculations assume a rate of £1 = 1·42 ecu.

ENERGY

South Africa (Oil Embargo)

94. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the international oil embargo of South Africa; and if he proposes measures to improve its effectiveness.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 19 October 1988, at columns *859-60*. The Government's export guidelines rule out the sales of crude oil from the United Kingdom continental shelf to South Africa; I have no plans to make any changes to that policy.

Off-shore Work Permits

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he intends to revise work permit procedures for off-shore installations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department has today made available for comment a paper setting out proposals for strengthening the statutory requirements for permit procedures on off-shore installations. Copies of the document have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Council

93. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what alternative proposals to the Delors report Her Majesty's Government will submit in time for the next meeting of the European Council.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's statement to the House on 29 June on the outcome of the European Council in Madrid on 26 and 27 June.

Directors' Pay

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) of 4 May, *Official Report*, column *352*, what further advice he has given or intends to give on the effects on industrial competitiveness of excessive pay rises for directors of large companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Pay is for the parties involved to agree and not for the Government to intervene. But clearly pay rises for directors, workers or anyone else must not be above what can be afforded.

Warstock

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he plans to announce when the Government will redeem the 3½ per cent. war stock issued in the 1939-45 war.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* There are no plans to redeem 3½ per cent. war stock.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect of a 1 per cent. change in United Kingdom interest rates and a 1 per cent. change in import prices, respectively, on the retail prices index.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* The effect of an increase in interest rates is to encourage saving, reduce spending and thus, over time, to bear down on inflation. However, because of the inclusion of mortgage interest payments in the RPI, a one percentage point increase in all United Kingdom interest rates would initially increase the retail prices index by about 0·4 per cent. No disaggregation is available for the imported component of the goods and services in the retail prices index. Whether, and to what extent, an increase in import prices will affect the RPI depends on the stance of monetary policy. The present Government is not prepared to accommodate inflation.

VAT

Sir Anthony Meyer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West may expect a reply to the letter which he sent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 3 April about the imposition of value added tax on caravan pitch rentals and services.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the reply sent on 5 July.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many purchases of premium bonds in each of the last three years for which figures are available were made in *(a)* amounts of over £100 and *(b)* amounts of £100 or less.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* The number of premium bonds sold in each of the last three years in amounts of over £100 and amounts of £100 or less are as follows:

Financial year	*£100 or more*		*Under £100*	
	Number	*Value* £	*Number*	*Value* £
1986-87	380,000	182,621,000	1,718,000	331,821,000
1987-88	443,000	260,601,000	1,730,000	34,533,000
1988-89	457,000	273,171,000	1,742,000	36,122,000

PRIME MINISTER

European Monetary System

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will give the list of conditions she has established for United Kingdom adherence to the European monetary system exchange rate mechanism of the European Community, in accordance with her reference to such conditions in the *Official Report*, 29 June, column 1109.

The Prime Minister *[holding reply 11 July 1989]:* The decision when to join the exchange rate mechanism will have to be judged against progress in a number of areas. In particular, when the level of United Kingdom inflation is significantly lower, there is capital liberalisation in the

Community and real progress has been made towards the completion of the single market, freedom of financial services and strengthened competition policy.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Bristol Research Centre

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science why the Bristol research centre dealing with food safety will be closed; and whether the Agriculture and Food Research Council took account of representations from the retail food trade in making its decision.

Mr. Jackson: The AFRC has decided to consolidate the work of the Institute of Food Research (IFR) on its two sites at Norwich and Reading to further enhance its science base. A consequence of this restructuring is that the laboratory at Langford, Bristol, will cease to be part of the IFR by the end of 1990 when AFRC institute funding will have been withdrawn. In planning the future scientific strategy of the Institute, advice was sought from a wide range of opinion including representatives from the food manufacturing industry, the retail food trade, academia and the Consumers Association.

Communication Handicaps

Mr. Alfred Moris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in the light of the High Court ruling against Lancashire county council on 16 March, he has any plans to assist local education authorities in their duty to provide speech therapy for children with speech and language impairments.

Mr. Butcher: Responsibility for the provision of speech therapy services has rested with health authorities since the reorganisation of the National Health Service in 1974. The recent High Court case involving Lancashire county council, which ruled that speech therapy could be considered as either educational or non-educational provision, does not affect health authorities general responsibilities in this area.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science in the light of the implementation of the Education Act 1988, what plans he has to ensure that the ¼ million children suffering from specific communication impairments have access to that curriculum by increasing the numbers of *(a)* trained teachers and *(b)* speech therapists.

Mr. Butcher: Children with special educational needs, including those with specific communication impairments, should benefit from the substantial resources that the Government are making available generally to local education authorities to support the introduction of the national curriculum. Within the £100 million available this year to LEAs through specific grants, it will be for authorities to decide how much to spend within this total to ensure maximum access to the national curriculum for children with special educational needs, where appropriate, including those with specific communication impairments.

The training and supply of speech therapists is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the findings of the working party examining the funding of communication aids for those with communication handicaps will be available.

Mr. Butcher: I understand that the working party on the assessment of children with communication handicap will report to my right hon. Friend and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health within the next few months.

University Libraries

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to have the results of the special monitoring exercise on universities' library spending for 1987-88, and 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 3 July at column 9.

Education Reform Act

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the position of four-year high schools with a transfer age of 10 years in relation to the certain categories of schools qualifying for particular weightings under section 107 of DES circular 7/88 published on 6 September 1988 under section 34(2) of the Education Reform Act;

(2) if he will define the phrase "certain categories of schools" in relation to section 107 DES circular 7/88 published on 6 September 1988 under section 34(2) of the Education Reform Act;

(3) in what circumstances local education authorities have discretion over allocation of the aggregated school budget, with reference to section 107 of DES circular 7/88 published on 6 September 1988 under section 34(2) of the Education Reform Act.

Mr. Butcher: Under schemes of local management, at least 75 per cent. of the aggregated schools budget must be allocated with reference to the numbers and ages of pupils in schools. All pupils of the same age will carry with them the same resources, irrespective of which type of school they attend. However, LEAs will have the discretion to allocate up to 25 per cent. of the aggregated schools budget by means of others factors which take account of objective need and are applied by means of a consistent set of rules.

Paragraphs 107 to 128 of DES circular 7/88 give some examples of such additional factors, such as a small school curriculum protection factor. Where such factors are used it may be appropriate within them to use different weightings for categories of schools serving different age ranges. For example, a lump sum in a small school curriculum protection factor might take a different value for primary schools than for secondary schools, and different value for primary schools than for secondary schools, and different again in middle schools. Four-year high schools with a transfer age of 10 could form such a category.

Student Numbers

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the actual, and percentage increase in *(a)* university first degree full-time students,

(b) polytechnic and other higher education first degree full-time students, *(c)* part-time university students, *(d)* part-time polytechnic and other higher education students, and *(e)* full-time post graduate students since May 1986, with *(c)* and *(d)* expressed in actual numbers and full-time equivalents.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested is shown in the following table.

Students in higher education in Great Britain

	Academic year beginning in		*1985 to 1987*	
	1985	*1987*	*Actual increase*	*Per cent. increase*
Full-time				
Postgraduate	65,859	69,869	4,010	6
University First Degree	238,329	245,577	7,248	3
Polys and Colleges First Degree	181,026	195,348	14,322	8
Part-time				
Open University	78,723	85,828	7,105	9
Other Universities	37,097	40,706	3,609	10
Polys and Colleges	209,956	232,744	22,788	11
Full-time Equivalent of Part-time (FTE)				
Open University	27,553	30,040	2,487	9
Other Universities	12,984	14,247	1,263	10
Polys and Colleges	73,485	81,460	7,976	11

Note: Part-time students have been counted as 0·35 FTE.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to secure a wider distribution of assisted places throughout England.

Mr. Butcher: This Department is contacting certain independent schools in four regions of the country with a view to widening the geographical availability of assisted places. The regions concerned are the North-East, the east midlands, South Yorkshire and the black country. We are approaching certain existing APS member schools in these regions to ascertain whether they would like more assisted places. We are also inviting certain schools which are not at present in the scheme, to apply to join. The target of 35,000 assisted places by the mid-1990s remains.

Headteachers (Resignations)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of headteachers in primary schools who resigned in each of the last five years; and what information he has on the reasons for resignation.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* The numbers of headteachers leaving full-time service in maintained nursery and primary schools in England in the last five years for which figures are available were as follows:

Year ending March	*Number*
1983	1,550
1984	1,670
1985	1,520
1986	1,460
1987	1,320

Information on the nature of these departures (available only for the last two years) is as follows:

	Year ending March	
	1986	*1987*
Transfers to full-time service elsewhere in the maintained sector in England and Wales	80	80
Transfers to part-time service in the maintained sector	10	10
Teaching employment outside the maintained sector	10	20
Retirements		
at age 60 or over	520	430
at ages under 60	630	550
Deaths	50	40
Others	160	190
Total	1,460	1,320

EMPLOYMENT

Additional Child Care Allowance

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he intends to introduce a £50 a week additional child care allowance for young mothers on YTS, equivalent to that which is paid under employment training.

Mr. Cope: No. My right hon. Friend does not consider such a provision to be in the best interests of the client group served by YTS.

Industrial Relations

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of public opinion regarding the Goverment's step-by-step reform of industrial relations legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: At each stage of the step-by-step reform of industrial relations and trade union legislation which the Government has pursued since 1979 we have submited our proposals for public consultation, and we have been able to frame legislation in the knowledge that the measures will be welcomed by employers, employees and the public generally. Our election manifestos, which contained many of our proposals in this area, have also clearly gained widespread public support.

Statutory Minimum Wage

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to how many countries in the EEC have a statutory minimum wage.

Mr. Nicholls: Five countries—France, Netherlands, Spain, Portugal and Luxembourg—have a statutory national minimum wage. In Ireland, as in the United Kingdom, a statutory minimum wage applies only in certain industries. Two countries—Belgium and Greece—have a general minimum wage laid down in national level collective agreements which are binding in law. Three countries—West Germany, Italy and Denmark—set minimum rates of pay by industry level, collective agreements applying in all sectors and binding in law.

Remploy Factory, Rutherglen (Closure)

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will ask the Remploy board to withdraw its proposal to close the Rutherglen factory.

Mr. Lee: No. I understand that discusions about the implications of the decision to close the Rutherglen factory are continuing between the company and the employees concerned.

Disabled Workers

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidelines are issued to Department of Employment staff regarding the distribution of quota exemption permits to employers failing to ensure that 3 per cent. of their work force are registered as disabled.

Mr. Lee: Instructions to disablement resettlement officers require them to consider the availability of suitable registered disabled people, and the degree of commitment shown by employers towards meeting their obligations under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

Small Businesses

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much his Department will be contributing to the Economic and Social Research Council's programme of research into small businesses, announced on 30 June, over the next four years.

Mr. Cope: My Department has agreed to pay ESRC a maximum of £120,000 towards the total cost of the programme. Payment will be made over a period of four years, at £30,000 per year, beginning in 1989-90.

Industrial Accidents

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he intends taking to reduce occupational accident rates to the 1981 levels.

Mr. Nicholls: Against a background of a substantial decline in fatal injury rates since 1981 and a more recent reversal in the rising trend of reported major injuries, the Government have reaffirmed their commitment to better health and safety at work by making financial provision allowing for real growth in HSE's activities over the next three years.

Tourism

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has had any representations about possible distortions to the United Kingdom's local economies resulting from the abolition of section 4 grants for tourist investment in England and their retention in Scotland and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I have received a number of representations about the future of the section 4 scheme, some of which refer to the possible effects of retaining the scheme in Scotland and Wales. However, after considering the wide variety of views expressed, I am convinced that the continued prosperity and growth of tourism in England is no longer dependent on this form of support.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure available for the number of people who have found jobs through using the service of job clubs in Durham City jobcentre.

Mr. Lee: The job club based in Durham jobcentre was the first job club to open in Britain, in November 1984. Since that time, 579 people have attended the job club. Of these 395 (68 per cent.) actually left for jobs with an employer. This result represents a considerable achievement in helping long-term unemployed people.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the last 12 months for which figures are available have been through *(a)* job clubs and *(b)* Restart; and how many have (i) secured full-time employment or (ii) further retraining or educational opportunities.

Mr. Lee: During the period 30 May 1988 to 26 May 1989, 2,220,611 Restart interviews were carried out. Of these, 1,949,570 resulted in an offer of positive help being made and 1,611,606 resulted in such an offer being accepted.

We do not know how many people ultimately end up in a job or other opportunity as a result of their Restart interview. However, many will be referred to job clubs.

During the 12 months from 1 June 1988 to 31 May 1989, 131,249 people went through the job club programme; 91,665 (or 70 per cent.) left for a positive outcome; 71,016 went into jobs and a further 20,649 went into training, education or a place on the enterprise allowance scheme.

Taken together, these two programmes represent a considerable achievement in helping long-term unemployed people.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the level of unemployment in the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow.

Mr. Lee: In May 1989 the number of unemployed claimants in Greenock and Port Glasgow parliamentary constituency was 5,798 compared with 7,581 in May 1988, a fall of 1,783 or 23·5 per cent.

Dock Workers (Pensions)

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will arrange for a survey of the pensions advice available to former registered dock workers.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no plans to survey the pensions advice available to former registered dock workers.

Employers are required to inform employees of main terms and conditions of employment, including the terms of any occupational pensions scheme which they offer. Employees may decide to make their own arrangements. Registered dock workers had their own occupational pensions scheme and this remains in existence following the abolition of the dock labour scheme.

SCOTLAND

Rent Arrears

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to introduce into Scotland arrangements similar to those announced recently for England and Wales whereby local authorities will be obliged to charge accumulated arrears of rent to other rent payers, through increasing their rents to cover the deficit in housing revenue accounts.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities in Scotland are required by paragraph 3(e) of schedule 15 to the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 to debit to their housing revenue accounts for each year the arrears of rent which have been written off in that year as irrecoverable. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to change this or other aspects of the financial management of local authority rent arrears.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the accumulated rent arrears owed to Scottish public housing authorities in March; and what was the figure in March of each of the five previous years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the accumulated rent arrears owed to Scottish public housing authorities is collected annually on the basis of arrears outstanding at 30 September. The amounts of arrears outstanding for each year from 1983 to 1988 are shown below:

	£ million
1983	[1]18·0
1984	[1]18·9
1985	[1]19·9
1986	[1] [2]24·3
1987	[1]26·7
1988	[1] [3]32·9

[1] Includes rates arrears of two local authorities.
[2] Includes unprocessed housing benefit awards for one authority.
[3] Excludes arrears of two local authorities.

Prisoners (Vocational Training)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of *(a)* adult and *(b)* young offender women prisoners received accredited vocational training during 1987 and 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The question cannot be answered in precisely the terms stated. The position in relation to individuals receiving accredited vocational training during the past two years was:

1987
Nil
1988
Adults—Seven
Young offender women prisoners—Nil

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which of the vocational courses of the industrial training boards, currently available to *(a)* adult and *(b)* young offender male prisoners, are also available to the same categories of women prisoners.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: At present there is a catering accredited vocational training course available for women prisoners. Skill training is also provided in sewing, garment making, cookery and horticulture. A properly accredited course in hairdressing will be introduced later this year.

Remand Times

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men were put in prison while waiting for trial and subsequently freed during 1987 and 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I regret that the information is not available.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest figure for the average time spent on remand for *(a)* men and *(b)* women.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The estimated average periods spent in custody on remand in 1988 were as follows:

	Days
Men	20·7
Women	17·7

Hostels

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many places for *(a)* men and *(b)* women are offered by hostels grant-aided under section 9 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980.

Mr. Lang: Hostels grant-aided by my right hon. and learned Friend under section 79 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 presently offer a total of 95 places. Seventeen of these were specifically designated for women originally but the accommodation is now being allocated more flexibly in the light of demand.

Cornton Vale

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many body and strip searches in Cornton Vale in 1988 where carried out on prisoners who were pregnant.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available, since no distinction is made in the records between inmates who are not pregnant and those who are.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many women prisoners who gave birth while imprisoned in Cornton Vale in 1988 *(a)* kept their babies with them following the births and *(b)* did not keep their babies following birth; and what was the length of service served by each such mother following the birth.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: One inmate, serving a three-month sentence, gave birth in Cornton Vale and kept her baby with her.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if any baby has remained with his or her mother in Cornton Vale prison beyond the age of 12 months during 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average number of days of in-service training provided to staff at Cornton Vale prison in 1987 and 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not immediately available but I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions the electronics link between the central office and each room in Cornton Vale women's prison malfunctioned in 1988; and what was the average time taken for repairs to be carried out.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The system malfunctioned on 22 occasions in 1988. Each fault is recorded and rectified the same day or the next working day. When the period of malfunction was prolonged the inmate was moved temporarily to another cell. The average time required to complete repair work was one and a half hours.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of *(a)* female and *(b)* male staff at Cornton Vale prison in 1987 were on sick leave for (i) less than one week, (ii) between one week and up to one month, (iii) between one month and up to six months, and (iv) for six months or more.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information sought by the hon. Member is as follows:

	1987	
	Female staff Per cent.	*Male Staff Per cent.*
Nil absence	19	32
Less than one week	30·5	23
Between one week and up to one month	32	27
Between one month and up to six months	18	18
For six months or more	0·5	0
Total staff involved	157	22

Prisons (Physical Training and Recreation)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the types of physical training and recreation activities available to *(a)* male and *(b)* female prisoners.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The types of physical training and recreation activities available to *(a)* male and *(b)* female prisoners are listed below. Not all are available in every prison. Usage by individual inmates is influenced by considerations of security and control as well as the needs of prisoners.

Male prisoners

1. Aerobic Fitness
2. Badminton
3. Basketball
4. Board Games
5. Craft Hobbies
6. Darts
7. Hillwalking
8. Pool
9. Running
10. Snooker
11. Soccer
12. Swimming
13. Table Tennis
14. Volleyball
15. Weight Training

Female prisoners

1. Badminton
2. Board Games
3. Craft Hobbies
4. Exercise to Music
5. Modified Keep Fit
6. Netball
7. Relaxation Classes
8. Running
9. Swimming
10. Volleyball

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the vocational courses of the industrial training boards presently available to *(a)* adult and *(b)* young offender male prisoners.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The vocational courses of the industrial training boards presently available to *(a)* adult and *(b)* young offender male prisoners are listed. The full range of courses listed is not available at every establishment.

Vocational courses available to adult male prisoners

1. Bricklaying
2. Carpentry and Joinery
3. Catering
4. Domestic Appliance Repairs and Servicing
5. Electronic Wiring and Computer Appreciation
6. Hairdressing
7. Horticulture
8. Motor Vehicle Mechanics
9. Painting and Decorating
10. Upholstery
11. Welding/Fabrication

Vocational courses available to young offender male prisoners

1. Bricklaying
2. Carpentry and Joinery
3. Catering
4. Computer Appreciation
5. Domestic Appliance Repairs and Servicing
6. Horticulture
7. Mechanical/Electrical Engineering
8. Motor Vehicle Mechanics
9. Painting and Decorating
10. Vehicle Body Repair/Paint Spraying
11. Welding/Fabrication

Prisoners (Meat Allowance)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current meat allowance for prisoners.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The current allowance of meat for prisoners, based on properly balanced dietary scales, averages 94p per inmate per week.

Women Prisoners (Qualifications)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of *(a)* adult and *(b)* young offender women prisoners have acquired qualifications during 1987 and 1988; and if he will list those qualifications.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The question cannot be answered in precisely the terms stated. The position in relation to individual educational qualifications gained during the past two years was:

Grades	*Number*
(a) Adults:	
1987	
O grades 13	gained by seven candidates
Highers 1	
1988	
O grades 8	gained by seven candidates
Highers 2	

Grades	Number
(b) Young Offenders:	
1987	
O grades 4	gained by two candidates
Highers Nil	
1988	
O grades 1	gained by one candidate
Highers Nil	

Local Authority Care

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of *(a)* girls and *(b)* boys between the ages of 10 and 16 years, held in care at 31 March 1988, had committed no crimes.

Mr. Lang: It is estimated that at 31 March 1988, 86·9 per cent. of girls and 50·6 per cent. of boys in local authority care between the ages of 10 and 16 years were there for reasons not related to the commission of crimes or offences.

Prisoners (Outside Employment)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of *(a)* male and *(b)* female prisoners were employed outside their prisons in 1987 and 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is not available in the form requested. Approximately 57 inmates in 1987 and 64 in 1988 went to outside employment (including community placements) from a prison training for freedom hostel as part of their formal pre-release programme. Some establishments made similar arrangements for other inmates selected as suitable. But the number of inmates allowed outwith prison unescorted for whatever reason remains small.

Prison Statistics

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what percentage of *(a)* men and *(b)* women convicted of crimes of violence were sent to prison in 1988;

(2) what percentage of convicted *(a)* men and *(b)* women were sent to prison in 1988;

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not yet available. Figures for 1987 are given in the table:

Percentage of men and women aged over 21 with a charge proved against them who were given a sentence of imprisonment

	Men	Women
All crimes and offences	8·0	3·5
Crimes of violence[1]	40·0	9·6

[1] Includes homicide, serious assault, carrying offensive weapons, robbery, cruelty to children etc.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of *(a)* men and *(b)* women with no previous convictions were sent to prison in 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on men or women first offenders who received a prison sentence as a percentage of those convicted of a first offence is not collected.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of women prisoners in 1987 and 1988 *(a)* had previously been in prison and *(b)* had previous convictions and non-custodial sentences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The only statistical information held centrally on the previous sentences and convictions of inmates is obtained from the inmates on reception into the penal establishment and may not be completely reliable. The figures from this source are as follows:

Women received under sentence into prisons in Scotland

Percentage admitting:	1987	1988
Previous direct prison sentence	69·0	69·5
Other direct custodial sentence (but not direct prison sentence)	4·7	4·2
Other previous sentence only (non-custodial or custodial sentence in default of fine/compensation order)	7·6	11·7
No previous sentence	18·7	14·6

Women Prisoners (Psychiatric Treatment)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of women prisoners in 1986, 1987 and 1988 have received psychiatric treatment while in custody; and what percentage of these women were mothers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held in the form requested, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prisoners (Child Care)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will conduct an inquiry into child care arrangements, particularly concerning the numbers of children taken into care, whose parents are currently inmates of Scottish prisons.

Mr. Lang: No.

AIDS

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many positive HIV antibody test results there were until *(a)* 31 March 1988 and *(b)* 31 March 1989 in each health board area in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: By 31 March 1989 1,621 HIV antibody test results had been reported to the Communicable Diseases (Scotland) Unit. A breakdown of this total by health board area is given as follows:

Health Board	Number of positive results
Argyll and Clyde	13
Ayrshire and Arran	[1]
Borders	[1]
Dumfries and Galloway	13
Fife	24
Forth Valley	59
Grampian	37
Greater Glasgow	253
Highland	11
Lanarkshire	22
Lothian	962
Orkney	Nil
Shetland	[1]
Tayside	218
Western Isles	Nil

[1] Under 10 results: in accordance with established practice, exact numbers not given as publication may jeopardise medical confidentiality.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest number of positive HIV antibody test results, and the cumulative total of people diagnosed with AIDS in each health board area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of positive HIV antibody test results in Scotland which were reported to the Communicable Diseases (Scotland) Unit until 30 June 1989 is 1,668. A breakdown of this total by health board area is given in the following table. The cumulative total of people diagnosed with AIDS who were reported to the unit area until that date is 102. Of that number, Greater Glasgow and Lothian health boards accounted for 33 and 48 cases, respectively. Argyll and Clyde, Ayrshire and Arran, Fife, Forth Valley, Grampian, Highland, Lanarkshire and Tayside health boards accounted for the remainder. Where the number of cases in each board area for each category was under 10, the total in accordance with established practice is not published so as not to jeopardise medical confidentiality.

Health Board	*Number of positive results*
Argyll and Clyde	13
Ayrshire and Arran	[1]
Borders	[1]
Dumfries and Galloway	13
Fife	25
Forth Valley	59
Grampian	37
Greater Glasgow	259
Highland	11
Lanarkshire	23
Lothian	993
Orkney	Nil
Shetland	[1]
Tayside	224
Western Isles	Nil

[1] Under 10.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cumulative total of people diagnosed with AIDS until 31 March; and how many of these had been diagnosed within the previous 12 months in each health board area in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The cumulative total of people diagnosed with AIDS who were reported to the Communicable Diseases (Scotland) Unit until 31 March 1989 is 85. The number of these who were reported to the unit within the previous 12 months is 33. Of that number, Greater Glasgow and Lothian health boards accounted for 10 and 15 cases, respectively. Argyll and Clyde, Grampian and Tayside health boards accounted for the remainder. The number of cases in each board area was under 10, but in accordance with established practice the totals are not published so as not to jeopardise medical confidentiality. Figures relating to the previous 12 months may require to be adjusted when all relevant information is available to take account of cases reported within, but diagnosed before, the 12-month period in question.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cumulative total of people diagnosed with AIDS until 31 March 1988; and how many of these had been diagnosed in the 12 months prior to that date, in each health board area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The cumulative total of people diagnosed with AIDS who were reported to the Communicable Diseases (Scotland) Unit until 31 March 1988 is 52. The number of these who had been diagnosed within the previous 12 months is 34. Of that number, Greater Glasgow and Lothian health boards accounted for 15 and 14 cases, respectively. Fife, Grampian, Lanarkshire and Tayside health boards accounted for the remainder. The number of cases in each board area was under 10, but in accordance with established practice the total are not published so as not to jeopardise medical confidentiality.

Waterways (Discharges)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for consent to discharge unsatisfactory effluent into rivers have been granted by river purification boards so far in the present year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am aware of none. River purification boards, in granting consent to discharge sewage and trade effluents, attach conditions which ensure that, in the circumstances appropriate to each case, the quality of the receiving waters is not adversely affected.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sites in Scotland are authorised to discharge radioactive liquid waste to waterways.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are 112 sites in Scotland authorised to dispose of liquid radioactive waste, either to coastal waters or, in the majority of cases, to the sewerage system.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the estimated tonnage of sewage disposed of on an annual basis into the rivers *(a)* in Strathclyde and *(b)* in Scotland as a whole.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available in the form sought. Treated effluent from around 1 million people is discharged to non-tidal rivers in Strathclyde from the council's sewage treatment works; in Scotland as a whole the corresponding figure is some 1,600,000.

Labour Statistics

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what percentage of claimants in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow and *(b)* Strathclyde were classified as long-term unemployed in April; and what plans he has to reduce that number.

Mr. Ian Lang: The number of claimants unemployed for over one year in the Greenock and Port Glasgow parliamentary constituency and Strathclyde region in April 1989, and the percentage of total claimants that represented, is shown in the table below.

April 1989

	Claimants unemployed for over one year	*As a percentage of total claimants*
Greenock and Port Glasgow parliamentary constituency	2,865	47·1
Strathclyde region	59,239	43·5

The number of claimants unemployed for over a year has fallen by around 30 per cent. in both the constituency

and the region over the past two years. We aim to reduce unemployment even further by continuing with our successful economic policies.

"Care in the Community"

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what conclusions he has reached about the recommendations in the Griffiths report on "Care in the Community"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The report by Sir Roy Griffiths on "Care in the Community" made far-reaching recommendations about the funding and delivery of community care services for the elderly, people with mental and physical disabilities and people with mental health problems. The report did not formally apply to Scotland, but I have been fully involved in the Government's detailed consideration of the report.

Our objectives for the development of community care in Scotland are the same as those set out in the statement made today by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health. We wish to enable people to live as full and independent a life as is possible for them in the community for as long as they wish to do so.

I have given detailed consideration to the policy implications for Scotland and have had regard to the many comments and representations that I received about Sir Roy Griffith's report. My proposals are as follows.

I have decided that local authorities in Scotland should be responsible for meeting the contribution from public funds towards the cost of the care of people in private and voluntary residential care and in nursing homes. They will, in collaboration with health boards, assess the care needs of individuals applying for such support and will reach a view on whether residential care is required or whether, in view of the primary objective of sustaining people in their own homes, a better outcome is possible by devising suitable individual packages of care. In future, therefore, the special income support system for those in homes will be ended, and local authorities will be responsible for providing any help required towards the costs of residential care in the cases where they decide that a residential home would be appropriate.

Local authorities will continue to meet the full cost of accommodating people in local authorities' own homes subject to their existing powers to make charges according to residents' ability to pay. These new arrangements will apply from April 1991 to all new claimants for income support. Existing residents of registered residential care or nursing homes at this date will remain eligible for income support under the present rules.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is today announcing further details of these new arrangements.

Local authorities must have adequate resources for their new responsibilities. This will mean transferring to them an appropriate share of what the Government would otherwise have provided to support social security payments to people in residential and nursing home care. I shall be discussing the detailed financial implications with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the necessary decisions will be taken in the public expenditure survey next year.

The new role of local authorities cannot be fully discharged without renewed emphasis on the importance of joint planning between local authorities and health boards, with the full involvement of the private and voluntary sectors. The health and social needs of individuals with mental and physical disabilities are inseparable and the assessment procedures which local authorities will establish must reflect this fact. Joint planning is already an established feature of health and social work policy in Scotland and we look to local authorities, working with health boards and other agencies, to ensure that it is effective. The community health services will continue to play an essential part in meeting the medical and nursing needs of people outside hospital.

Local authorities have traditionally been the biggest single provider of residential and community services in Scotland. More recently there has been growth in both the private and voluntary sectors and local authorities will want to make full use of these facilities in the interests of widening consumer choice. Local authorities should increasingly see themselves not just as providers but as enablers making full use of the range of provision available in the private and voluntary sector.

Because of the importance of the new responsibility placed on local authorities I will be giving careful consideration to suitable planning and monitoring arrangements to allow the implementation of the new policy in Scotland to be evaluated. It will be important that local authorities should have clear plans for the development of community care services, worked out in collaboration with health boards and the independent sector. I will expect authorities to have such plans and propose to take powers to call for reports on community care services. The arrangements already in operation through the joint consultative group comprising representatives of the social work services group and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities will continue to have an important part to play.

I have decided to make no change to the existing statutory functions of local authority and health boards for the registration and inspection of residential care and nursing homes.

I am considering carefully the question of improving liaison between general practitioners and social work departments to ensure that the latter are aware of patients' needs for social care. This could be achieved by informal day-to-day contact as well as more formal procedures. I will be discussing with local authorities, the representative medical bodies and health boards how this could be best achieved.

Finally, I propose to maintain the current arrangements which have generally worked well for sharing responsibility for services to the mentally ill between health and social work authorities, while improving further the arrangements for co-operation and co-ordination.

A White Paper will be published in the near future about the Government's overall proposals in response to the Griffiths report, including implications for community care in Scotland. It will contain more detail about legislative requirements, planning and monitoring systems and the basis of the new funding arrangements.

Warrant Sales

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to ensure that warrant sales will not be initiated against persons who have been duped by unscrupulous finance companies in Scotland.

Mr. Maude: I have been asked to reply.

The Government have no plans to restrict the use of warrant sales to enforce court orders in respect of consumer credit. The existing law, in particular the Consumer Credit Act 1974 and regulations under it, provides appropriate protection for the consumer. The Act lays down requirements for the proper execution of regulated consumer credit agreements. Improperly executed agreements are enforceable only at the discretion of the court.

Dolphin Bathrooms (Finance Agreements)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the company, Dolphin Bathrooms, Drumage road, Worcester, England, and the signing of uncompleted finance agreement by pensioners in Clydesdale; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Maude: I have been asked to reply.

Neither my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry not my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has received such representations.

Under the Consumer Credit Act a regulated agreement is not properly executed unless the document presented for signature embodies all the terms of the agreement, other than the implied terms. Improperly executed agreements are enforceable only at the discretion of the court.

Action on individual cases of alleged abuse in relation to consumer credit is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading and for the local authorities who both have relevant functions under the Consumer Credit Act 1974. If the hon. Gentleman has evidence of such abuse, I hope that he will give it to the Director General or to the trading standards department of the local authority concerned.

Cairngorm Ski-Lift Company

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what regular monitoring is carried out on the environmental management of the ski area managed by the Cairngorm Ski-Lift Company.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 12 June 1989]:* Regular environmental monitoring of the area is carried out by the Highlands and Islands Development Board in line with the Cairngorm Estate management plan, a copy of which is lodged in the House of Commons Library.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Colonies (Pensions)

3. **Mr. Michael Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how may ex-colonies now block the payment of pensions to United Kingdom citizens who worked in those colonies prior to independence; and if he will place in the Library a list of the countries concerned and the estimated pension arrears in each case.

Mrs. Chalker: There are no centralised comprehensive records of all those British nationals who are facing difficulty in obtaining their pensions from former colonies, or of the total sums involved. But we are aware of difficulties, of various sorts, in 10 former colonies. I shall place a list in the Library of the House.

Cambodia

9. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met a representative of the Cambodian Government based in Phnom Penh.

Mr. Eggar: We have no dealings with the so-called People's Republic of Kampuchea.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the extent to which the influence of Pol Pot and his associates can be eradicated from the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.

Mr. Eggar: It is generally accepted that Pol Pot and his associates are totally unacceptable to the international community. Whether there are responsible Khmer Rouge elements who could be included in a quadripartite interim administration in Cambodia is primarily a matter for the Cambodian factions to decide.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes he proposes in the United Kingdom's policy on the representation of Cambodia at the United Nations in the light of the anticipated Vietnamese withdrawal.

Mr. Eggar: Cambodia's representation at the United Nations is one of many issues to be reviewed in the context of a comprehensive political settlement. At this stage, we see no reason to change our present policy.

78. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's involvement in peace talks in Cambodia.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 27 June.

34. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on relations with Cambodia.

Mr. Eggar: We have relations neither with the current regime in Phnom Penh nor with the coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea. We look forward to an early comprehensive settlement leading to a representative Government in Cambodia and will continue to work actively to this end.

Madrid Summit

13. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his best estimate of the time within which each of the conclusions reached at the Madrid summit will be implemented.

Mrs. Chalker: The conclusions of the Madrid European Council were placed in the Library of the House on 29 June. I have arranged for a list of those items where a timetable is indicated to be published in the *Official Report*.

Following is the information:

European Council, Madrid—26-27 June 1989

Conclusions: list of items where timetable indicated

Internal market

Commission invited to submit remaining proposals for completion of the market at the earliest opportunity.

Fraud

Council of Ministers invited to decide as soon as possible on Commission proposals for regulations.

Taxation

Council of Ministers asked to agree the broad lines of a solution on indirect tax by the end of 1989 and to reach agreement on taxation of savings before 1 July 1990.

Audio-visual (Broadcasting)

Council of Ministers invited to continue work on transfrontier broadcasting directive with a view to adopting it within cooperation procedure time limit (ie August-September).

Social dimension

Social Affairs Council to state position on work necessary to achieve social dimension of single market before Strasbourg European Council on 8-9 December.

Environment

Environment Council called on to examine proposal for a European Government Agency at the earliest opportunity.

Commission asked to submit programme to protect environment in regions of Community affected by desertification, erosion and deforestation.

Research and development

Commission to submit new framework programme for 1990-94.

Economic and monetary co-operation

ECOFIN and General Affairs Councils, Commission, Central Bank Governors and Monetary Committee to adopt provisions necessary to begin stage 1 on 1 July 1990 and to prepare inter-governmental conference on subsequent stages, to be held after stage 1 begun.

External

Report on progress on EC-EFTA relations at December European Council; call for EC-ACP negotiations to be concluded by the end of the year.

80. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the outcome of the Madrid summit.

Mrs. Chalker: The Prime Minister's statement on 29 June was widely welcomed, in the House and in the country.

West Africa

17. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he will do to assist in the economic development of Nigeria, Ghana, The Gambia and Sierra Leone in the next three years.

Mrs. Chalker: We expect to maintain substantial programmes of technical co-operation for Nigeria, Ghana, The Gambia and Sierra Leone in the next three years. We also aim to continue with project aid in Ghana and The Gambia. In addition, we expect to provide balance of payments support for all four countries, on condition that economic adjustment programmes, supported by the IMF and IBRD are in place.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present status of relations with Ghana.

Mrs. Chalker: Our relations with Ghana are close and friendly. The British Government play a significant role in support of Ghana's programme of economic re-structuring through our bilateral aid programme and the multilateral institutions. I visited Ghana from 28 to 30 June, accompanied by a group of British business men. During my visit I had discussions on a wide range of bilateral and multilateral issues with the Head of State, Flt. Lt. J. J. Rawlings, and other members of the Ghanaian Government.

67. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current British-Nigerian relations.

Mrs. Chalker: We enjoy close and warm relations with Nigeria. Following the state visit to the United Kingdom by President Babangida in May, I led a large party of United Kingdom business men to Nigeria on 25 and 26 June. I held talks with President Babangida and other members of the Nigerian Government, and opened a hydrocarbons seminar sponsored jointly by the DTI and the Energy Industries Council. Both my visit and the seminar seem to have been highly successful.

Semtex

18. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what statements have been issued by the Czechoslovakian Government regarding Semtex and the addition of a smelling agent.

Mr. Waldegrave: The most recent public statement by the Czechoslovak Government on this subject was the joint United Kingdom-Czech letter addressed to the United Nations Secretary-General on 15 June which urged support for work on a Convention to mark all plastic and sheet explosives for detection. This followed our successful sponsorship of a Security Council resolution (No. 635) on 14 June. I am arranging for a copy of this letter and of SCR 635 to be placed in the Library of the House.

29. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what international negotiations he has had about the marking of Semtex and other high explosives; and if he will make a statement.

41. **Mr. Mates:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what international negotiations he has had in respect of the marking of Semtex and other high explosives; and if he will make a statement.

55. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what international discussions he has had about the marking of Semtex and other high explosives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We held preliminary talks with Czechoslovakia earlier this year on the marking of plastic explosives for the purposes of detection. Further negotiations in the United Nations Security Council in New York (initiated during the British presidency of the council in May) led to the unanimous adoption on 14 June of Security Council resolution No. 635, calling for the drafting of an international convention on the marking of plastic and sheet explosives. Work on this is already under way in the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

Australia

19. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on the outcome of the visit of the Australian Prime Minister to Britain in June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Mr Hawke's visit last month was a great success. It was an indication of the desire of both Governments to give a new impetus to our bilateral

relations. The visit set the seal on the dynamic relationship with Australia which has developed in the past year or two.

56. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures are being undertaken to strengthen United Kingdom-Australian relations.

Mr. Eggar: Following the recent successful visit to Britain by the Prime Minister of Australia, we will be seeking to ensure that a regular momentum of ministerial and official exchanges is maintained. Visits to Australia in the past twelve months by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Defence, for Trade and Industry, and for Education and Science have meant a thorough review of our relationship with Australia in these and other fields. We want to see the already strong co-operation in these areas maintained and, wherever possible, expanded.

Lebanon

20. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had discussions with his European Economic Community counterparts or members of the United Nations Security Council on seeking the early withdrawal of Syria from Lebanon.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. We and our European partners have consistently sought the withdrawal from Lebanon of all non-Lebanese troops other than UNIFIL. We fully support the efforts of the Arab League to bring this about.

82. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the Arab League's initiative towards the Lebanon.

Mr. Waldegrave: We and our European partners fully support the Arab League's efforts to find a solution to the crisis in Lebanon.

Single Market

21. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had on the removal of barriers by 1992 with other European Economic Community Foreign Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has reported to the House on the European Council at Madrid on 26-27 June, which reviewed progress on reducing technical and physical barriers within the Community.

58. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to ensure that the 1992 programme does not soak up staff resources in the European Commission in areas of shortage of expertise, including the development directorate.

Mrs. Chalker: We shall continue to press for the most effective and efficient use of Commission staff, including flexible deployment and improved career planning, to ensure that staffing levels correspond to the needs arising from the Commission's tasks.

46. **Mr. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the impact of the increase in the number of Green party representatives in the European Parliament on progress towards completion of the internal market.

Mrs. Chalker: The Green party is opposed to the single market programme. Its policies, if adopted, would sabotage the increasing prosperity which the single market will bring.

Hong Kong

22. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the resettlement of the citizens of Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: We have received many representations on this subject. During his visit to Hong Kong from 2 to 4 July my right hon. and learned Friend was able to discuss this with the Governor and his advisers, with members of the Executive and Legislative Councils, and with representatives of a wide range of opinion within the Hong Kong community.

53. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions have taken place with other Commonwealth countries concerning the future of Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed the future of Hong Kong with the Australian Prime Minister during his recent visit. We have also been in touch with our Australian and Canadian counterparts who will attend this week's economic summit in Paris. We shall raise the matter there and at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in the autumn.

44. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further action the Government intend to take to solve the problem of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: We are playing an active role in meetings of the Steering Committee set up by the international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees in Geneva on 13-14 June to maintain progress on the comprehensive plan of action adopted by the conference. We will seek to ensure, through bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, that agreements reached at the Conference are implemented as swiftly as possible and in a balanced way. As part of our contribution, we have agreed to resettle 2,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong over the next three years.

32. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit Hong Kong.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Governor of Hong Kong; and what subjects were discussed.

64. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last visited Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs visited Hong Kong from 2 to 4 July and made a statement to the House on 5 July.

International Debt

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to meet other Foreign Ministers to discuss the problems of international debt; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has met Foreign Ministers of other countries recently at the OECD Ministerial meeting in June, at a meeting between representatives of EC and eight Latin American countries on 15 April in Grenada, at the European Council meetings in Madrid on 26-27 June and at a number of bilateral meetings. Debt was just one important issue discussed at these meetings. The next occasion may be at the economic summit in Paris on 14 to 16 July.

Human Rights

24. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the conference on security and co-operation in European human rights conference in Paris.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Paris meeting of the CSCE conference on the human dimension saw the thorough examination of implementation by CSCE participating states of their human rights commitments and the tabling of some 36 new proposals. These will be considered at the next meeting of the conference on the human dimension in Copenhagen in June 1990.

El Salvador

25. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he supports the United States Congress proposal to link aid to El Salvador to respect for human rights.

Mr. Eggar: Respect for human rights is one of several factors we take into account when determining the level and nature of our own bilateral aid to individual countries.

Poland

26. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet the Polish Foreign Minister to discuss Anglo-Polish relations.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs certainly hopes to meet the Polish Foreign Minister again, and expects to do so in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly meeting in September.

47. **Sir Bernard Braine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Anglo-Polish relations.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my right hon. Friend to the replies that I gave on 6 April and 14 June.

Middle East

27. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on recent developments in the middle east peace process.

Mr. Waldegrave: In a major statement in Madrid last month the European Council appealed to the parties to seize the present opportunity to achieve peace. The Twelve made it clear that the election proposals put forward by Mr. Shamir could contribute to the peace process but that the PLO must participate in negotiations. We fear that the Likud decisions last week, if translated into Israeli Government policy, will make progress much more difficult.

50. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the middle east peace process.

60. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further action will be taken within the foreseeable future either by the United Kingdom or the Community in pursuance of a settlement of the Palestinian question.

Mr. Waldegrave: The European Council last month appealed to the parties to seize the present opportunity to make progress towards peace and set out the views of the Twelve on how this might be achieved.

Argentina

28. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress he has made towards restoring diplomatic relations with Argentina.

Mr. Eggar: It is premature to think of restoring diplomatic relations with Argentina; progress must first be made on removing practical barriers and increasing confidence.

But we have noted remarks made by President Menem and Foreign Minister Cavallo during and after the inauguration. We have consistently stressed our readiness to work for more normal relations with Argentina by making progress on practical matters while excluding sovereignty. If the Argentines are now moving towards that position, then a prospect for progress may be opening up.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have made to the offer of President Carlos Menem of Argentina in relation to talks on the resumption of bilateral relations.

Mr. Eggar: We have as yet received no formal proposal from President Menem but we have noted reports that he would be willing to move towards a resumption of diplomatic relations.

We have consistently expressed our readiness to work for more normal relations with Argentina by making progress on practical issues, while excluding sovereignty. If the Argentines are now moving towards that position, then a prospect for progress may be opening up.

It is premature to be talking of a resumption of diplomatic relations; progress must first be made on removing practical barriers to trade and communications and on rebuilding confidence.

China

30. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is considering trade sanctions against the Government of China.

81. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is considering trade sanctions against the Government of China.

Mr. Eggar: No, for the reasons given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 22 June.

84. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with EEC ministers on events now taking place in China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The events in China were discussed by Foreign Ministers of the Twelve on 12 June, when it was agreed that the Presidency should carry out a demarche stressing the Twelve's grave concern at the continuing repression in China. The subject was discussed again at the European Council in Madrid, resulting in the declaration on China of 27 June.

85. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the ambassador of the People's Republic of China; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) on 16 June.

62. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further representations he has made to the Chinese authorities appealing for commutation of recent death sentences on humanitarian grounds.

Mr. Eggar: On 17 June the EC Twelve made a demarche to the Chinese authorities appealing for clemency for the first persons sentenced to death in connection with the demonstrations. On 21 June the Foreign and Commonwealth Office issued a statement deeply deploring the first executions and renewing our appeal to the Chinese authorities not to persecute those who had campaigned for their democratic rights. On 27 June the European Council also expressed its dismay and urged that the executions be stopped.

54. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions are currently taking place aimed at achieving a united international stance towards recent developments in the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Eggar: We have kept in close contact with our friends and partners over reactions to events in China. The European Council issued a declaration on China on 27 June. China will also be discussed at the forthcoming economic summit in Paris.

39. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has been making to the Government of China on the subject of human rights.

Mr. Eggar: We and our EC partners have firmly condemned the brutal actions of the Chinese Government. I made this plain to the Chinese chargé d'affaires on 5 June. On 27 June the European Council adopted a declaration on China which reiterated our condemnation and called on the Chinese authorities to respect human rights. In accordance with this declaration, ambassadors representing the Twelve have been instructed to seek the admission of independent observers to attend trials and visit prisons.

South Africa

31. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current policy of Her Majesty's Government on meeting the African National Congress, the United Democratic Front and the South African Government.

Mrs. Chalker: Our policy is to maintain contact with all shades of opinion in South Africa.

90. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what continued pressure the Government is exercising to secure the release of Mr. Nelson Mandela and the lifting of restrictions on the African National Congress.

Mrs. Chalker: We continue to urge the South African Government to release, immediately and unconditionally, Mr. Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and to unban the African National Congress and other political parties.

36. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his meeting with F. W. de Klerk of South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I held talks with Mr. F. W. de Klerk which were friendly and businesslike. They covered a range of issues, notably progress towards Namibian independence and the process of constitutional reform in South Africa. We naturally took the opportunity to express concern for the unconditional release of Mr. Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, the lifting of the state of emergency and many other issues.

33. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have recently been made to the South African Government with a view to ending apartheid in that country.

Mrs. Chalker: We take every opportunity to encourage change in South Africa leading to the peaceful replacement of apartheid by a non-racial, representative system of government acceptable to all South Africans.

Israel

35. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relations with Israel.

86. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Anglo-Israeli relations.

Mr. Waldegrave: Relations with Israel are good and we are in close touch with the Israeli Government on Arab-Israel and other issues.

75. **Mr. Richard Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit the Israeli occupied territories and the Gaza Strip.

Mr. Waldegrave: None at present.

65. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek an undertaking from the Israeli Government to renounce unlawful violence against the population of areas under Israeli military occupation.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Israeli authorities are well aware of our concern at their use of excessive force in the occupied territories.

Eastern Europe

37. **Sir George Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British relations with eastern Europe.

63. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British relations with the countries of eastern Europe.

Mr. Waldegrave: British relations with eastern Europe vary from country to country. We have closest relations with countries such as Hungary and Poland which are making substantial steps forward towards freedom and democracy.

Pakistan

38. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs had talks with Prime Minister Bhutto on 6 July in London and with the Pakistan Foreign Minister on 7 July. They discussed a wide range of issues including United Kingdom-Pakistan relations, Afghanistan and other regional developments. My right hon. and learned Friend also made it clear we are looking forward to seeing Pakistan rejoin the Commonwealth.

Angola

40. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to assist in the peace process in Angola; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We warmly welcome the progress made towards internal reconciliation in Angola, notably the meeting between President dos Santos and Dr. Savimbi on 22 June and the agreement to implement a ceasefire from 24 June. We are urging both sides to respect the ceasefire and to continue to show flexibility in the difficult negotiations that lie ahead.

89. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his latest assessment of the prospects for internal reconciliation in Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: We warmly welcome the progress made towards internal reconciliation in Angola, notably the meeting between President dos Santos and Dr. Savimbi on 22 June and the agreement to implement a ceasefire from 24 June. We are urging both sides to respect the ceasefire and to continue to show flexibility in the difficult negotiations that lie ahead.

Hungary

42. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Hungarian Government; and what matters were discussed.

83. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Anglo-Hungarian relations.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend met Hungarian State Minister, Imre Pozsgay, on 25 April. I have just returned from a three-day visit to Hungary where I met Prime Minister Nemeth, Mr. Pozsgay and a wide range of Government party and Opposition leaders. I also laid a wreath at the grave of Imre Nagy and placed flowers at the memorial to Raoul Wallenberg. I expressed the strong support of the Government—and, I believe, of the House—for the process of reform taking place in Hungary.

Drugs

43. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures are being taken to assist the governments of drug producing countries in the destruction of drugs.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom has contributed some £10·7 million since 1982 to the United Nations fund for drug abuse control, which is the main multilateral channel for providing assistance to developing countries in combating drug production. The United Kingdom also spent around £3 million in 1988-89 on bilateral projects. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary recently announced a series of further measures to combat drug production, trafficking and consumption, including an international conference to be held in the United Kingdom in 1990.

Central America

45. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on progress towards the establishment of the central American Parliament.

Mr. Eggar: There has been no progress since my reply to the hon. Member's question of 27 October 1988. The Costa Rican Parliament has yet to ratify the treaty establishing the central American Parliament.

Nicaragua

48. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government have any plans to send an official group of observers to the Nicaraguan elections.

Mr. Eggar: We have told the Nicaraguan Government that we would be ready to appoint an official observer if an invitation is received. We await their response.

68. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the progress towards democracy being made by Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: No. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister saw President Ortega on 8 May, she made clear her concern that recent legislative reforms fall far short of the democratisation promised and were potentially restrictive. Recent events have tended to confirm our fears. We are also concerned at Nicaraguan attempts to impose unacceptable restrictions on diplomats' ability to report on the election campaign. We hope that steps will be taken by the Nicaraguan Government to rectify this situation.

51. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will visit Nicaragua in the near future to discuss democracy in that country.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans at present to visit Nicaragua.

Refuseniks

49. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the USSR about the difficulties of refuseniks.

Mr. Waldegrave: We press the Soviet authorities regularly on individual refusenik cases and of the wider need for institutionalised reform. Over the last year at least 68 long-term refuseniks about whom we have made representations have been allowed to leave the Soviet Union.

Lebanon

52. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has received since 1 January on the plight of British hostages believed to be held in the Lebanon.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have received a number of representations from hon. Members, members of the public and interested organisations on the plight of the British hostages detained in Lebanon.

Terrorism

57. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to stress the importance of closer co-operation in the defeat of international terrorism at the next appropriate international gathering.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is a central strand of our policy to promote international co-operation to combat terrorism. We have taken, and will continue to take, a leading role to this effect in international organisations. The economic summit Seven group, which meets this weekend, will provide another opportunity to press for closer co-operation.

Antarctica

59. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress was made in discussions with the Prime Minister of Australia concerning the convention on Antarctica.

Mr. Eggar: In discussion with the Australian Prime Minister and his colleagues, we said that we still believed the convention offered the best means of protecting the Antarctic environment. We made it clear that we intended to ratify the convention and that we were prepared to consider further measures for the protection of the Antarctic environment, but not at the expense of the convention. For their part, the Australian Ministers explained their view of the Antarctic minerals convention and their decision not to sign it.

Slavery

66. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in achieving international co-ordination to tackle the problem of child slavery.

Mr. Eggar: Over 85 countries are parties to the Slavery Convention of 1926 (as amended by the Protocol of 1953), and 102 countries to the supplementary convention on the abolition of slavery, the slave trade and institutions and practices similar to slavery.

Since 1974, a United Nations working group on slavery has met annually to review the problems of slavery, including child slavery, and has recommended remedial action.

We hope that the draft United Nations convention on the rights of the child will shortly be adopted and will further strengthen international efforts to combat child slavery in all its forms.

Soviet Union (Train Disaster)

69. **Mr. Heddle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what medical assistance was made available by Her Majesty's Government to the Soviet Union after the recent train disaster there.

Mr. Waldegrave: We supplied air beds, artificial ventilators and other urgently needed equipment and pharmaceuticals to a value of £68,000. We also helped with arrangements for two teams of specialists from Bristol, Leeds, London, Manchester and South Grampian to travel to Chelyabinsk to help treat the victims. (One of the teams was organised by the World Association for Emergency and Disaster Medicine). We also offered to arrange treatment in the United Kingdom.

Brazil

70. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Brazilian Government on environmental matters.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Lord President to the hon. Member for Barnsley West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) on 27 June. During his visit my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development signed a memorandum of understanding on environmental co-operation with the Brazilian Government. In addition, we have had a number of detailed discussions at ministerial and official level with the Brazilian authorities on these matters in recent months.

European Parliament

71. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the consequences for European Community policies of the new political composition of the European Parliament.

Mrs. Chalker: We hope that the European Parliament will continue to make its full contribution to the Community legislative process and to effective inter-institutional co-operation in the Community.

Iraq (Kurdish Minority)

72. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what effect the Iraqi treatment of its Kurdish minority has had on British relations with Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have repeatedly expressed to the Iraqi Government our concern for the treatment of the Kurdish community in Iraq and the need to respect their human rights. We firmly believe that the only way of influenceing Iraq's attitude to these problems is by maintaining an effective working relationship.

World Economic Summit

73. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will raise the issue of international debt at the world economic summit.

Mrs. Chalker: We expect international debt to be one of the important subjects covered at the economic summit.

Guatemala

74. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent information he has about disappearances of political activists in Guatemala.

Mr. Eggar: Our information is that disappearances in Guatemala are occurring at a rate of about 25 a month. A number of these are attributable to criminal activity but there is little doubt that many are politically motivated. Although the numbers are greatly reduced compared with the early 80s, the situation is a cause of continuing concern. Like the UN special adviser on human rights in Guatemala, we do not, however, believe that the present civilian Government either condone or carry out abductions.

Namibia

76. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the current state of implementation of the Namibian peace accords.

Mrs. Chalker: We welcome recent progress on the implementation of the UN plan for Namibian independence.

Immigration

77. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current delays in preparing explanatory statements for refusal of entry clearance in *(a)* Bombay and *(b)* Islamabad.

Mr. Eggar: On average, explanatory statements are prepared and forwarded to the appellate authorities within three months of receipt of an appeal in Bombay and within four to six weeks in Islamabad.

Individual cases may take longer, depending on what further inquiries the entry clearance officer needs to make in the light of the grounds for appeal.

Vietnam

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what subjects were discussed when he last met the Foreign Minister of Vietnam.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs last met the Foreign Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on 28 June. They discussed how to follow up the agreements reached in Geneva for resolving the problem of Vietnamese boat people and the prospects for a comprehensive political settlement in Cambodia.

Cuba

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of United Kingdom-Cuban relations.

Mr. Eggar: We maintain normal diplomatic relations with Cuba. The Cuban First Vice Foreign Minister, Dr. Jose Viera Linarea, is visiting the United Kingdom from 9 to 15 July.

EC Social Charter

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, when he next meets West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the European Community social charter will be discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will next see Herr Genscher and other EC colleagues at the economic summit in Paris on 14 to 16 July. The social charter will not be on the agenda.

Rain Forests

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice Her Majesty's embassy and consulates in Brazil have given United Kingdom companies seeking to carry on economic enterprises within areas of rain forest.

Mr. Eggar: Our officials are in regular contact with companies involved in the rain forest. As my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development pointed out during his recent visit to Brazil, it is for the Brazilian authorities to decide what action they should take to enforce their laws. However, all companies should be concerned not only to comply with the laws of the country in which they operate but also to ensure that their operations are environmentally friendly.

Bulgaria

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Bulgaria about its

expulsion of large numbers of the Turkish ethnic minority in that country; and what consultations he has had with other European Economic Community Governments regarding assistance to Turkey to meet the costs of resettlement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame Jill Knight) on 10 July.

We have discussed the political aspects of this issue with our EC partners, who, like us, are particularly concerned about developments in the region. As yet, no decision has been taken about EC aid for the resettlement of refugees from Bulgaria.

UNESCO

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans for renewing the United Kingdom's membership of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We are following developments at UNESCO closely and hope that the director general and member states will be able to bring about the changes that are needed. Before we can consider reviewing our position on membership, we will need to be convinced that fundamental reforms are being implemented both in UNESCO's administration and in its programmes. This will certainly not be possible until after UNESCO's general conference in November, which will adopt, and approve funding for, the organisation's new medium-term plan for 1990-95 and its programme and budget for 1990-91.

Second World War (Records)

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now authorise the release through the Public Records Office of the special operations executive records from the second world war; and why none of these records has been made public to date.

Mr. Eggar: No. Established criteria provide for certain records to be retained or closed for periods longer than 30 years under appropriate sections of the Public Records Act 1958 as amended.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Large Loaves

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will investigate the effects of the linkage between Stewarts and Crazy Prices in Northern Ireland and Associated British Foods-Allied Bakeries on the price of large loaves in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Maude: I have been asked to reply.

Under United Kingdom competition legislation, it falls to the Director-General of Fair Trading to keep commercial activities in the United Kingdom under review. The director general's office has considered the competitive situation in the retail sale of bread in Northern Ireland including the operating relationship between Associated British Foods-Allied Bakers and Stewarts and Crazy Prices, and has taken into account the report of the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, published on 29 June, on the price of a large loaf in Northern Ireland. The director general does not consider that formal action under the competition legislation is warranted. If the hon. Member has any evidence of monopoly abuse, anti-competitive or restrictive trade practices he should draw it to the attention of the Director General of Fair Trading.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to ensure genuine competition in the retail sale of large loaves in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Maude: I have been asked to reply.

Under United Kingdom competition legislation it falls to the Director General of Fair Trading to keep commercial activities in the United Kingdom under review. The director general's office has considered the competitive situation in the retail sale of bread in Northern Ireland, and has taken into account the report of the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, published on 29 June, on the price of a large loaf in Northern Ireland but does not consider that formal action under the competition legislation is warranted. If the hon. Member has any evidence of monopoly abuse, anti-competitive or restrictive trade practices he should draw it to the attention of the Director General of Fair Trading.

WALES

Housing

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the area of other land (hectares) disposed of to private developers, including housing associations, for housing purposes by each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole during (i) 1980-81, (ii) 1981-82, (iii) 1982-83, (iv) 1983-84, (v) 1984-85, (vi) 1985-86, (vii) 1986-87, (viii) 1987-88 and (ix) 1988-89;

(2) what was the number of *(a)* denial and *(b)* admission response notices issued for shared ownership by each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole during (i) 1980-81, (ii) 1981-82, (iii) 1982-83, (iv) 1983-84, (v) 1984-85, (vi) 1985-86, (vii) 1986-87, (viii) 1987-88 and (ix) 1988-89;

(3) what was the number of completed *(a)* right-to-buy full ownership sales and *(b)* other sales of (1) houses and (2) flats by each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole during (i) 1980-81, (ii) 1981-82, (iii) 1982-83, (iv) 1983-84, (v) 1984-85, (vi) 1985-86, (vii) 1986-87, (viii) 1987-88 and (ix) 1988-89;

(4) what was the number of completed disposals of council dwellings *(a)* built for sale, *(b)* improved for sale, *(c)* sold unimproved for improvement by purchaser, *(d)* sold to sitting tenants and *(e)* other sales for (i) full ownership and (ii) shared ownership by each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole during (1) 1980-81, (2) 1981-82, (3) 1982-83, (4) 1983-84, (5) 1984-85, (6) 1985-86, (7) 1986-87, (8) 1987-88 and (9) 1988-89;

(5) what was the number of completed right-to-buy sales where the authority does not own the freehold for *(a)* houses and *(b)* flats by each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole during (i) 1980-81, (ii) 1981-82, (iii) 1982-83, (iv) 1983-84, (v) 1984-85, (vi) 1985-86, (vii) 1986-87, (viii) 1987-88 and (ix) 1988-89;

(6) what was the number of completed right-to-buy sales with part 5 or section 32 mortgages for *(a)* flats and *(b)* houses by each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole during (i) 1980-81, (ii) 1981-82, (iii) 1982-83, (iv) 1983-84, (v) 1984-85, (vi) 1985-86, (vii) 1986-87, (viii) 1987-88 and (ix) 1988-89 for (1) right-to-buy sales and (2) other sales;

(7) what was the number of denial response notices issued on the right to full ownership by each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole during *(a)* 1980-81, *(b)* 1981-82, *(c)* 1982-83, *(d)* 1983-84, *(e)* 1984-85, *(f)* 1985-86, *(g)* 1986-87, *(h)* 1987-88 and *(i)* 1988-89;

(8) what was the number of dwellings where right-to-buy claims were denied under paragraph 11 of schedule 5 to the Housing Act 1985, as amended, included at section A1 by each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole during *(a)* 1980-81, *(b)* 1981-82, *(c)* 1982-83, *(d)* 1983-84, *(e)* 1984-85, *(f)* 1985-86, *(g)* 1986-87, *(h)* 1987-88 and *(i)* 1988-89;

(9) what was the number of right-to-buy full ownership claims for *(a)* houses and *(b)* flats received by each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole during (i) 1980-81, (ii) 1981-82, (iii) 1982-83, (iv) 1983-84, (v) 1984-85, (vi) 1985-86, (vii) 1986-87, (viii) 1987-88 and (ix) 1988-89;

(10) what was the number of right-to-buy shared ownership leases granted for *(a)* houses and *(b)* flats by each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole during (i) 1980-81, (ii) 1981-82, (iii) 1982-83, (iv) 1983-84, (v) 1984-85, (vi) 1985-86, (vii) 1986-87, (viii) 1987-88 and (ix) 1988-89;

(11) what was the number of right to shared ownership leases granted for *(a)* houses and *(b)* flats with a part V or section 32 mortgage in each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole during (i) 1980-81, (ii) 1981-82, (iii) 1982-83, (iv) 1983-84, (v) 1984-85, (vi) 1985-86, (vii) 1986-87, (viii) 1987-88 and (ix) 1988-89;

(12) what was the selling price, net of discount, of completed disposals of council dwellings *(a)* built for sale, *(b)* improved for sale, *(c)* sold unimproved for improvement by purchaser, *(d)* sold to sitting tenants, *(e)* other sales and *(f)* the total for (1) full ownership and (2) shared ownership by each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole during (i) 1980-81, (ii) 1981-82, (iii) 1982-83, (iv) 1983-84, (v) 1984-85, (vi) 1985-86, (vii) 1986-87, (viii) 1987-88 and (ix) 1988-89;

(13) what was the total value of right-to-buy discount for each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole during (i) 1980-81, (ii) 1981-82, (iii) 1982-83, (iv) 1983-84, (v) 1984-85, (vi) 1985-86, (vii) 1986-87, (viii) 1987-88 and (ix) 1988-89;

Mr. Peter Walker: A limited amount of the information is already published in "Local Housing Statistics". The rest can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Council House Sales

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of accepted right-to-buy applications being dealt with but not yet completed at end of quarter for each local authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is given in the following table.

Accepted right to buy applications being dealt with but not yet completed at end of March 1989.

Welsh District	*Number*
Aberconwy	219
Alyn and Deeside	516
Arfon	343
Blaenau Gwent	544
Brecknock	219
Cardiff	2,466
Carmarthen	27
Ceredigion	344
Colwyn	—
Cynon Valley	407
Delyn	188
Dinefwr	32
Dwyfor	44
Glyndwr	186
Islwyn	412
Llanelli	683
Lliw Valley	347
Meirionnydd	120
Merthyr Tydfil	384
Monmouth	572
Montgomeryshire	262
Neath	414
Newport	1,206
Ogwr	808
Port Talbot	397
Preseli	107
Radnorshire	39
Rhondda	136
Rhuddlan	224
Rhymney Valley	499
South Pembrokeshire	177
Swansea	1,265
Taff-Ely	1,021
Torfaen	1,515
Vale of Glamorgan	844
Wrexham Maelor	1,393
Ynys Mon	616
WALES	18,976

Planning Inquiries

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of planning inquiries held by his Department in the last year, the average for each of the past five years, the numbers of those appeals that were allowed and the numbers of those allowed appeals when the relevant local council's planning officer had recommended that the application be allowed.

Mr. Peter Walker: In 1988, 178 planning inquiries were heard and 67 appeals were allowed following inquiries. Over the years 1983-87 inclusive an annual average of 179 inquiries was heard, and an average of 78 appeals was allowed following inquiries. Information about the numbers of appeals allowed when the relevant local council's planning officer had recommended that the application be allowed is not recorded centrally.

Housing Land

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department uses the same method of calculating the adequacy of housing land at planning inquiries as the methodology specified for local councils to use by Welsh Office circular 47/84, "Land for Housing in Wales."

Mr. Peter Walker: The methodology suggested for calculating the adequacy of housing land supply in Wales

remains as set down in Welsh Office circular 47/84. The advice on methodology in circular 47/84 applies equally to decisions made by myself and my inspectors.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the adequacy of housing land in *(a)* Cardiff and *(b)* Wales under the latest calculations using the methodology laid down in Welsh Office circular 47/84, "Land for Housing in Wales."

Mr. Peter Walker: Up-to-date figures on housing land supply in Cardiff are not available centrally but a joint land availability study for the county of South Glamorgan is expected to be published soon.

Studies for most other counties have been published in recent years but it is not possible to calculate a single figure for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales why the Land Authority for Wales uses a method of calculating the adequacy of housing land different from that laid down in Welsh Office circular 47/84, "Land for Housing in Wales"; and how he ensures that no confusion or distortion is achieved by the use of the different methods of calculation.

Mr. Peter Walker: Joint land availability studies published by the Land Authority for Wales in co-operation with house builders' representatives and local authorities normally use the method suggested in Welsh Office circular 47/84. However, in certain circumstances, especially where the structure plan is out of date, the group may agree to present an alternative methodology if they believe this is appropriate. The reasoning is fully explained in the published report and any differences of view among group members recorded.

Water Undertakings

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy on the disclosure of information by *(a)* Welsh Water and *(b)* other water public limited companies operating wholly or partly in Wales in the event of the privatisation of the existing water authorities; and what changes are proposed to the information water authorities currently have to make available to the public.

Mr. Peter Walker: The underlying policy on the disclosure of information by privatised water and sewerage undertakers will be that applicable to registered limited companies rather than that appropriate to public corporations. In addition the Water Act 1989, earlier water legislation, and the conditions of appointment of water and sewerage undertakers under the 1989 Act, contain a wide range of requirements for making information available to the public, either direct or through myself, the National Rivers Authority, or the director general. For example, water undertakers will be required for the first time to publish information about the quality of water supplied for domestic purposes, both regularly and in response to individual requests for information. The National Rivers Authority will be required to maintain a public register including matters such as details of analyses of samples of effluent discharged by sewerage undertakers into controlled waters. The director general's register, which will also be a public document, will contain all key matters concerning appointments, and including information such as undertakings given under section 20(5)(b) relating to compliance programmes. Under section 34, I may arrange for the publication of information connected with the carrying out of water and sewerage functions as may appear to be in the public interest. And the director general's annual report, which must be laid before Parliament, will contain a general survey of developments within the scope of his functions.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what obligations he imposes on statutory water companies operating partly or wholly in Wales to disclose information about their structure, finances and activities; and what are the comparable obligations of private limited companies.

Mr. Peter Walker: The requirements for disclosure of information about the structure, finances and activities of the statutory water companies and private limited companies are set out in company legislation.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy that full information should be accessible to the public in respect of statutory water companies operating partly or wholly in Wales to at least the same extent as any ordinary public limited company.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Government regard the statutory water company model as an outdated method of running a business. I hope that statutory water companies will take early advantage of the opportunity offered by the Water Act 1989 to become registered companies under a simplified conversion procedure, which will bring them within the scope of the full range of modern company legislation.

NHS Beds

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many National Health Service beds *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* by health authority are provided in accommodation built (i) before 1914, (ii) before 1939, (iii) between 1939 and 1979 and (iv) since 1979.

Mr. Peter Walker: This information is not available centrally.

Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many schools currently in use in Wales, and by local education authority, were built *(a)* before 1914, *(b)* before 1939, *(c)* between 1939 and 1979, and *(d)* since 1979 showing for each category the numbers of primary, secondary or special schools, and the total number of pupils.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Details of the ages of school buildings are not held centrally.

Sewage Treatment Works (Rhymney Valley)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* the applications he has received for the lowering of discharge consents of sewage works in the Rhymney valley.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have received two applications for time-limited variations of consent conditions as follows:

Draethen STW
Rudry STW

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those sewage treatment works in the Rhymney valley which have failed to meet their discharge consents during the last 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Walker: All sewage treatment works in the Rhymney valley met their consent conditions during 1988 (the latest period for which figures are available).

Community Care

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about future arrangements for promoting effective community care.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Government have laid the foundations in Wales over recent years for the effective development of community care for those who are not cared for appropriately in hospitals or residential care.

In the past, services for people with mental illness and mental handicaps have been imbalanced and poorly distributed across Wales. People have had to travel too far to receive care and the choice has too often been between care in isolated institutions, or of little or no support in people's own homes and communities.

The all-Wales mental handicap strategy has, over the past six years, made possible an unprecedented expansion of community services. For example, the number of people receiving support in their own homes has risen from just 41 in 1982-83 to 1,898 in 1987-88; the number of places in ordinary housing for adults from 66 to 614; the number of places in short-term care in domestic settings from 34 to 404; and the number of people receiving new community-based day-care services from 37 to 809. This has made possible a substantial reduction in the number inappropriately cared for in institutions, with a drop between 1983 and 1987 of almost 20 per cent. in the number of mental handicap hospital in-patients, and a fall of nearly 60 per cent. in the number of children in such hospitals. To build on this success, I have allocated £18,658 million towards the development of the new pattern of services in 1989-90, an increase of nearly £5 million over expenditure in 1988-89.

In June this year I published, following a highly successful public consultation, the all-Wales strategy for the development of mental illness services. This builds on the significant expansion of new patterns of services which has come about in recent years and which has been assisted by the recurrent additional investment of £13 million which the Welsh Office has made available. The strategy lays special emphasis on fully effective care and support for the most vulnerable, including those who require support in their own homes and communities after periods of care as hospital in-patients. I look forward to the joint plans from health and social services authorities and other agencies which the strategy calls for, and which will be the basis for development and investment by all concerned, including additional support from the Welsh Office, to secure the development throughout Wales of quality local services.

The greatest challenge in health and social care facing us in Wales, as elsewhere in the western world, is providing adequately for increasing numbers of very elderly people. Our massive investment in health care, including community health services, with an increase in expenditure in real terms of almost 45 per cent. since 1978-79, has led to record levels of patient care from which the elderly in particular have benefited. There have also been significant developments in personal social services based on an increase in net expenditure in real terms since 1978-79 of 40 per cent. This has made possible, for example, a 65 per cent. increase in the provision of aids to people of 65 and over, and a 40 per cent. increase in the number of home helps. In addition, there has been an unprecedented expansion of sheltered housing; since 1984-85 more than 4,000 additional units have been provided by housing associations and local authorities.

To help health and social service authorities and other agencies to develop services further, in 1987 my Department launched an initiative on the care of the elderly. This aims to stimulate new developments by grant-aiding demonstration and innovative projects delivering services in a more flexible, co-ordinated and cost-effective way. Some 30 projects are now being funded for up to five years at a total cost of £6,261,000. We are appraising continuously the progress of the initiative and, in considering projects submitted next year, we will be placing more emphasis on encouraging the development of domiciliary care. My Department is undertaking surveys of services for disabled people provided by district health authorities, local authorities and voluntary organisations in Wales. Their needs will also be examined in the next round of health authorities' strategic planning. The results of those exercises will be available next year, but preliminary guidance for planning purposes will be issued shortly.

Last year I introduced a new grant scheme to support training for local authority staff and others who deal with child abuse. I have expanded the programme this year to provide grants totalling £483,000. I have also approved a new initiative to improve services to families with children under five. Under this, grant totalling up to £400,000 will be available to the voluntary sector over three years. I am considering carefully what might be done more generally to promote better child care and support for families.

These distinctive strategies and initiatives for Wales have been developed by taking advantage of my responsibility for a wide range of health and social services, housing and related programmes and the direct relationship between my Department and the key agencies. Nonetheless, those who need help with social care, over and above that which their families and friends provide, have had to look primarily to two separate sources: to the social services authorities for home care, day care and some residential care services, but to social security offices for payments towards the cost of places in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes. In Wales, as elsewhere in the United Kingdom, this has led to a significant and unplanned expansion of residential and nursing home care which has not been subject to any assessment of individuals' need for such provision. This has not enabled the public agencies to secure the best packages of care for all individuals, although many have undoubtedly benefited from residential and nursing home care, and has worked against the generally accepted objective of securing, wherever appropriate, that people are supported in their own homes and communities.

The Government have been reviewing these arrangements following Sir Roy Griffiths's report "Community Care: Agenda for Action" which was published in March

1988. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security have today announced the Government's conclusions. The main conclusions apply equally to Wales. In particular, I propose that in future there shall be a single budget for those seeking help from public funds for the cost of social care, whether in their own homes or in a residential or nursing home, which will enable decisions to be taken about the right package of care to meet an individual's particular needs at any point in time. The proposals will remove any perverse incentive for people to go into residential or nursing home care regardless of their needs.

The delivery of effective community care depends on close co-operation at all levels between personal social services and health authorities, family practitioner services, housing authorities and associations, and the voluntary and private sectors, and on all concerned having close regard to the views of those who benefit from services, including any informal carers. The experience of the existing strategies and initiatives in Wales shows that the right place for leadership in respect of the public funding of social care rests with the social services authorities. I propose, therefore, that they should have the responsibility and the budget for such care and other costs not met by the social security system. Community health and family practitioner services will continue to have responsibility and the budgets to ensure the provision of essential health care for those who need it.

In addition to the joint plans already required under the all-Wales mental illness and mental handicap strategies, I propose that social care plans for all groups should be produced by the social services authorities, in collaboration with other relevant agencies and interests. Detailed guidance on the arrangements for these plans will be issued in due course.

Local authorities are increasingly seeing the value of securing effective social care from whatever source can best provide it, rather than automatically providing it directly themselves. There are good examples in Wales of the use of voluntary and private sector providers in this way. I shall expect local authorities to build on this experience. In this spirit, it is proposed that the local authorities should continue to meet the costs of people in their own residential homes, subject to their existing power to make charges according to residents' ability to pay. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is not proposing any change to the benefit rules for the residents of such homes.

As in the rest of Great Britain, those already in registered residential and nursing home care before the new arrangements come into effect will remain eligible for financial help under the existing benefit arrangements.

With resources transferred from the social security programme, I shall make available additional resources to the local authorities commensurate with their new responsibilities. There will be detailed discussions with representatives of the local authorities and other key interests about the financial and wider implications of these proposals to ensure the successful introduction of the new arrangements, which I propose should take effect from April 1991.

The action which has already been taken in Wales to promote more effective community care has been widely commended. It has shown that it is possible for the Welsh Office, working in close co-operation with health and social services authorities and other agencies, to provide a favourable context for the provision of quality services which meet individual's needs in a sensitive way and which help and support, rather than undermine, informal networks of care provided by families and friends, which for most people will always constitute by far the greater part of the social care. The arrangements I have described in this statement will build on these achievements and enable all concerned to ensure that the people of Wales have every opportunity to preserve their independence for as long as possible as valued members of their communities.

HEALTH

Immunisation

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in the *Official Report* the uptake figures for measles, mumps and rubella immunisation in each health authority in England for each of the last 10 years and at the latest available date.

Mr. Freeman: The available information is not precisely in the form requested. Information on mumps has been collected only from 1 October 1988 with the introduction of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine. This data will be available later in the year. Two-year uptake rates for measles are available only from 1984, by district health authority, as these authorities were formed only in 1982 as a result of the NHS restructuring. Rubella uptake rates are available only nationally. The available information is given in the table.

1978 to 1987-88
Rubella, uptake rate—schoolgirls aged 14 years
Percentage of population immunised in England

	Per cent.
1978	74
1979	78
1980	84
1981	84
1982	83
1983	84
1984	86
1985	86
1986	87
1987-88	86

Vaccination and immunisation—measles
Completed primary courses—two year uptake rate by DHA

	[1]1984	1985	1986	1987-88
Northern RHA	[2]68	[2]72	[2]75	[2]77
Hartlepool	[2]53	[2]53	[2]58	[2]60
North Tees	61	65	71	76
South Tees	[2]54	[2]55	65	68
East Cumbria	75	77	78	82
South Cumbria	77	81	82	73
West Cumbria	35	89	89	92
Darlington	75	74	78	83
Durham	[2]73	78	83	87
North West Durham	80	83	89	89
South West Durham	74	79	82	85
Northumberland	67	74	78	87
Gateshead	70	75	73	78
Newcastle	70	74	75	79
North Tyneside	68	73	72	79
South Tyneside	62	73	76	78
Sunderland	64	70	74	79
Yorkshire RHA	[2]68	[2]73	[2]75	[2]76
Hull	65	68	69	73
East Yorkshire	85	88	89	88
Grimsby	[2]54	[2]67	[2]72	75
Scunthorpe	[2]78	83	82	86
Northallerton	76	79	85	86
York	71	75	77	77
Scarborough	76	79	81	81
Harrogate	73	78	77	85
Bradford	66	72	77	78
Airedale	70	71	75	80
Calderdale	72	75	76	76
Huddersfield	73	76	78	82
Dewsbury	69	57	71	74
Leeds Western	[2]68	79	84	87
Leeds Eastern	—	73	77	81
Wakefield	67	71	74	84
Pontefract	66	68	69	73
Trent RHA	[2]65	[2]72	[2]76	[2]79
North Derbyshire	[2]59	[2]72	82	85
Southern Derbyshire	77	82	82	[2]82
Leicestershire	68	76	80	84
North Lincolnshire	67	75	73	73
South Lincolnshire	62	67	72	78
Bassetlaw	67	71	74	74
Central Nottinghamshire	[2]61	75	78	80
Nottingham	68	75	80	77
Barnsley	61	69	74	77
Doncaster	62	69	73	85
Rotherham	58	66	70	89
Sheffield	[2]64	[2]70	[2]70	[2]79
East Anglia RHA	[2]73	[2]77	[2]79	[2]80
Cambridge	78	82	82	84
Peterborough	67	71	71	76
West Suffolk	78	84	[2]82	85
East Suffolk	84	82	85	87
Norwich	76	82	83	84
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	75	80	81	83
West Norfolk and Wisbech	73	77	78	79
Huntingdon	69	70	71	86
North West Thames RHA	[2]64	[2]66	[2]71	[2]74
North Bedfordshire	77	81	85	87
South Bedfordshire	69	73	74	73
North Hertfordshire	[2]68	75	77	81
East Hertfordshire	[2]74	78	79	84
North West Hertfordshire	[2]75	80	83	86
South West Hertfordshire	[2]70	77	80	80
Barnet	68	70	71	75
Harrow	61	51	70	77
Hillingdon	61	65	69	75
Hounslow and Spelthorne	59	62	79	73
Ealing	57	[2]57	63	67
Brent	[2]62	[2]61	[2]62	[2]56
Paddington and North Kensington	62	61	58	58
Riverside	—	62	63	64
North East Thames RHA	[2]52	[2]58	[2]62	[2]70
Basildon and Thurrock	49	63	67	77
Mid Essex	[2]75	81	83	84
North East Essex	[2]51	[2]74	[2]75	81
West Essex	[2]51	58	[2]58	[2]66
Southend	53	68	69	78
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	68	67	67	71
Hampstead	43	51	48	53
Bloomsbury	[2]44	[2]43	[2]45	[2]51
Islington	[2]33	[2]50	[2]61	[2]65
City and Hackney	53	57	60	65
Newham	46	54	45	51
Tower Hamlet	49	61	66	72
Enfield	69	67	72	71
Haringey	65	64	61	64
Redbridge	51	57	56	51
Waltham Forest	[2]57	62	69	73
South East Thames RHA	[2]60	[2]66	[2]66	[2]70
Brighton	62	73	81	74
Eastbourne	70	80	84	84
Hastings	[2]73	69	77	79
South East Kent	[2]62	[2]72	75	83
Canterbury and Thanet	67	70	73	[2]81
Dartford and Gravesham	73	72	74	77
Maidstone	76	77	82	[2]81
Medway	63	66	72	84
Tunbridge Wells	[2]68	77	78	82
Bexley	45	57	44	36
Greenwich	40	51	50	68
Bromley	68	71	74	84
West Lambeth	[2]56	[2]54	[2]52	56

	[1]1984	1985	1986	1987-88
Camberwell	58	52	49	58
Lewisham and North Southwark	38	59	63	67
South West Thames RHA	[2]66	[2]70	[2]72	[2]77
North West Surrey	63	64	63	73
West Surrey and North East Hants	75	88	86	84
South West Surrey	64	68	63	59
Mid Surrey	[2]92	[2]74	67	77
East Surrey	50	71	67	59
Chichester	84	84	84	90
Mid Downs	85	87	89	[2]89
Worthing	84	85	86	89
Croydon	60	72	71	[2]77
Kingston and Esher	[2]55	60	67	[2]70
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	[2]52	[2]57	55	55
Wandsworth	51	56	62	74
Merton and Sutton	60	62	64	63
Wessex RHA	[2]75	[2]79	[2]81	[2]82
East Dorset	77	80	81	86
West Dorset	[2]74	[2]79	80	82
Portsmouth and South East Hants	73	72	76	78
Southampton and South West Hants	84	87	87	90
Winchester	82	86	86	89
Basingstoke and North Hants	79	83	82	81
Salisbury	[2]70	71	72	[2]85
Swindon	[2]68	73	78	82
Bath	[2]73	76	77	[2]84
Isle of Wight	58	69	73	82
Oxford RHA	[2]74	[2]78	[2]78	[2]82
East Berkshire		[2]67	[2]65	76
West Berkshire	[2]70	56	70	76
Aylesbury Vale	82	84	87	87
Wycombe	[2]85	[2]90	88	90
Milton Keynes	[2]72	73	72	67
Kettering		79	80	83
Northampton	[2]68	75	75	79
Oxfordshire	78	83	88	[2]90
South Western RHA	[2]71	[2]76	[2]78	[2]83
Bristol and Weston	76	80	81	80
Frenchay	73	80	79	84
Southmead	80	85	85	84
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	53	60	64	69
Exeter	80	86	87	90
North Devon	81	83	88	90
Plymouth	72	79	79	85
Torbay	74	79	82	86
Cheltenham and District	71	73	79	81
Gloucester	56	59	71	80
Somerset	87	89	91	92
West Midlands RHA	[2]59	[2]64	[2]67	[2]75
Bromsgrove and Redditch	77	71	72	76
Herefordshire	74	73	76	80
Kidderminster and District	79	76	79	82
Worcester and District	81	79	82	83
Shropshire	72	76	79	83
Mid Staffordshire	46	62	80	85
North Staffordshire	38	71	77	80
South East Staffordshire	52	64	66	89
Rugby	74	72	74	81
North Warwickshire	73	69	73	78
South Warwickshire	77	80	83	[2]85
Central Birmingham	[2]51	[2]54	[2]62	[2]65
East Birmingham	[2]38	44	62	52
North Birmingham	[2]54	[2]55	[2]62	[2]70
South Birmingham	[2]52	[2]62	[2]46	[2]61
West Birmingham	68	77	58	64
Coventry	58	62	68	73
Dudley	68	73	75	78
Sandwell	59	63	66	71
Solihull	54	56	63	72
Walsall	55	61	66	75
Wolverhampton	54	58	66	70
Mersey RHA	[2]57	[2]62	[2]66	[2]72
Chester	85	89	89	84
Crewe	81	85	87	85
Halton	81	86	90	84
Macclesfield	88	91	93	88
Warrington	67	70	74	82
Liverpool	47	49	53	64
St. Helens and Knowsley	41	54	56	65
Southport and Formby	58	67	67	80
South Sefton	37	41	47	57
Wirral	81	88	88	82
North Western RHA	[2]53	[2]59	[2]66	[2]71
Lancaster	51	75	77	85
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	41	50	59	62
Preston	43	54	53	73
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	51	53	55	64
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	47	52	60	68
West Lancashire	41	43	69	77
Chorley and South Ribble	37	47	61	63
Bolton	70	73	77	83
Bury	69	77	78	80
North Manchester	54	60	63	68
Central Manchester	52	60	64	73
South Manchester	47	48	54	57
Oldham	52	61	66	72
Rochdale	48	59	71	76
Salford	46	44	60	64
Stockport	67	70	74	80
Tameside and Glossop	64	71	74	80
Trafford	66	70	79	81
Wigan	67	72	76	79

[1] In 1984 figures include combined uptake rates for the following DHAs:
Leeds Western and Leeds Eastern;
East Berkshire and West Berkshire;
Kettering and Northampton.

[2] Uptake rates are those supplied DHA calculated rates have been used.

Mental Handicap

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of long-stay patients discharged from each mental handicap hospital in England and Wales since 1981.

Mr. Freeman: Provision of the information for each hospital would involve disproportionate cost. The table shows, for each district health authority, the number of discharges, excluding transfers and deaths, of mentally handicapped patients after a stay of one year or more in an NHS mental handicap hospital or unit in England. The figures in the table may not exactly equate to numbers of people, because some may have been discharged several times during the period. The information for 1981 could not be provided without disproportionate cost due to boundary changes to the district health authorities' areas. The information for Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

NHS Mental Handicap Hospitals and Units in England 1986
Number of long stay patients discharged by Hospitals in districts

District of treatment	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Northern RHA	59	66	104	80	112
Hartlepool	0	0	0	0	0
North Tees	0	1	3	0	1

District of treatment	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
South Tees	0	0	0	0	0
East Cumbria	0	0	0	0	0
South Cumbria	0	0	0	5	15
West Cumbria	15	14	14	22	2
Darlington	12	11	35	12	18
Durham	7	11	17	12	16
North West Durham	0	0	0	0	0
South West Durham	0	0	0	0	0
Northumberland	25	27	33	29	59
Gateshead	0	0	0	0	0
Newcastle	0	0	0	0	0
North Tyneside	0	0	0	0	0
South Tyneside	0	2	2	0	1
Sunderland	0	0	0	0	0

Notes:
(1) Excludes deaths and transfers to other hospitals and Special Hospitals.
(2) Long stay are those patients discharged after a stay of one year or more.

District of treatment	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Yorkshire RHA	104	67	95	192	203
Hull	40	9	11	5	14
East Yorkshire	0	0	0	0	0
Grimsby	0	0	0	6	7
Scunthorpe	0	1	2	7	3
Northallerton	0	0	0	1	0
York	26	3	6	41	23
Scarborough	0	0	0	0	0
Harrogate	0	4	4	18	44
Bradford	8	13	24	12	34
Airedale	4	4	4	15	7
Calderdale	12	16	17	9	19
Huddersfield	0	0	2	18	3
Dewsbury	0	0	0	0	0
Leeds Western	0	0	0	0	0
Leeds Eastern	11	8	17	12	22
Wakefield	3	9	8	48	27
Pontefract	0	0	0	0	0

Notes:
(1) Excludes deaths and transfers to other hospitals and Special Hospitals.
(2) Long stay are those patients discharged after a stay of one year or more.

District of treatment	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Trent RHA	149	125	191	210	415
North Derbyshire	4	9	2	10	27
Southern Derbyshire	29	15	22	33	31
Leicestershire	16	15	10	28	26
North Lincolnshire	7	13	39	48	65
South Lincolnshire	3	0	12	22	76
Bassetlaw	0	0	0	0	0
Central Nottinghamshire	16	14	23	18	87
Nottingham	9	2	3	32	33
Barnsley	0	0	0	0	2
Doncaster	0	18	13	10	7
Rotherham	9	11	35	9	11
Sheffield	56	28	32	30	50

Notes:
(1) Excludes deaths and transfers to other hospitals and Special Hospitals.
(2) Long stay are those patients discharged after a stay of one year or more.

District of treatment	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
East Anglia RHA	37	96	85	88	79
Cambridge	2	15	8	15	4
Peterborough	2	2	1	6	0
West Suffolk	2	22	1	5	26
East Suffolk	5	6	20	22	18
Norwich	16	47	39	24	29
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	5	2	8	9	2
West Norfolk and Wisbech	5	2	8	7	0
Huntingdon	0	0	0	0	0

Notes:
(1) Excludes deaths and transfers to other hospitals and Special Hospitals.
(2) Long stay are those patients discharged after a stay of one year or more.

District of treatment	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
North West Thames RHA	72	77	84	83	70
North Bedfordshire	5	8	10	15	18
South Bedfordshire	0	0	1	0	1
North Hertfordshire	0	0	0	0	0
East Hertfordshire	0	0	0	0	0
North West Hertfordshire	40	27	39	32	38
South West Hertfordshire	23	19	18	30	11
Barnet	2	15	9	0	0
Harrow	0	0	0	0	0
Hillingdon	0	0	0	0	0
Hounslow and Spelthorne	0	0	0	0	0
Ealing	0	0	0	0	0
Brent	2	7	7	6	2
Paddington and North Kensington	0	1	0	0	0
Riverside	0	0	0	0	0

Notes:
(1) Excludes deaths and transfers to other hospitals and Special Hospitals.
(2) Long stay are those patients discharged after a stay of one year or more.

District of treatment	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
North East Thames RHA	47	42	90	111	71
Basildon and Thurrock	16	20	26	23	29
Mid Essex	2	1	3	3	2
North East Essex	17	2	32	32	29
West Essex	0	1	0	0	1
Southend	0	0	0	0	0
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	0	3	23	43	5
Hampstead	0	0	0	0	0
Bloomsbury	0	0	0	0	0
Islington	0	0	0	0	0
City and Hackney	0	2	2	4	0
Newham	0	0	0	0	0
Tower Hamlets	1	0	0	0	0
Enfield	0	3	1	0	3
Haringey	0	0	0	0	1
Redbridge	0	0	0	0	0
Waltham Forest	11	10	3	6	1

Notes:
(1) Excludes deaths and transfers to other hospitals and Special Hospitals.
(2) Long stay are those patients discharged after a stay of one year or more.

District of treatment	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
South East Thames RHA	110	136	203	258	354
Brighton	3	5	5	21	26
Eastbourne	8	6	15	3	14
Hastings	11	7	18	16	6
South East Kent	0	3	8	6	5
Canterbury and Thanet	15	35	28	33	33
Dartford and Gravesham	45	28	44	73	156
Maidstone	0	0	2	27	13
Medway	0	0	0	0	0
Tunbridge Wells	20	30	64	62	81
Bexley	0	0	0	0	0
Greenwich	2	0	2	7	9
Bromley	4	15	1	2	1
West Lambeth	0	0	0	0	0
Camberwell	0	0	0	0	0
Lewisham and North Southwark	2	7	16	8	10

Notes:
(1) Excludes deaths and transfers to other hospitals and Special Hospitals.
(2) Long stay are those patients discharged after a stay of one year or more.

District of treatment	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
South West Thames RHA	74	120	144	189	297
North West Surrey	1	6	32	20	27
West Surrey and North East Hants	0	2	1	3	3
South West Surrey	0	0	2	0	0
Mid Surrey	19	39	0	12	24
East Surrey	7	20	29	14	33
Chichester	1	2	1	0	0
Mid Downs	1	5	4	10	4
Worthing	0	4	1	1	0
Croydon	15	12	18	76	157
Kingston and Esher	0	0	0	0	0
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	2	5	3	2	13
Wandsworth	1	1	2	0	0
Merton and Sutton	27	24	51	51	36

Notes:
(1) Excludes deaths and transfers to other hospitals and Special Hospitals.
(2) Long stay are those patients discharged after a stay of one year or more.

District of treatment	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Wessex RHA	84	139	126	119	206
East Dorset	0	0	1	10	2
West Dorset	0	16	4	9	27
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	28	61	42	30	22
Southampton and South West Hampshire	18	24	28	32	58
Winchester	0	0	1	11	40
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	0	7	21	2	11
Salisbury	0	0	1	2	0
Swindon	17	5	21	8	10
Bath District	12	13	4	7	5
Isle of Wight	9	13	3	8	31

Notes:
(1) Excludes deaths and transfers to other hospitals and Special Hospitals.
(2) Long stay are those patients discharged after a stay of one year or more.

District of treatment	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Oxford RHA	44	62	65	92	104
East Berkshire	5	10	5	5	1
West Berkshire	12	22	17	18	24
Aylesbury Vale	8	6	5	18	7
Wycombe	0	0	0	0	0
Milton Keynes	0	0	0	0	0
Kettering	1	2	1	0	0
Northampton	5	6	6	8	16
Oxfordshire	13	16	31	43	56

Notes:
1. Excludes deaths and transfers to other hospitals and Special Hospitals.
2. Long stay are those patients discharged after a stay of one year or more.

District of treatment	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
South Western RHA	123	168	410	251	193
Bristol and Weston	2	16	36	9	8
Frenchay	5	29	75	32	33
Southmead	12	33	80	42	22
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	22	11	34	37	16
Exeter	40	57	123	59	56
North Devon	1	0	4	1	0
Plymouth	4	4	2	5	1
Torbay	3	2	19	31	10
Cheltenham	0	0	0	0	0
Gloucester	10	5	13	3	12
Somerset	23	11	24	32	35

Notes:
(1) Excludes deaths and transfers to other hospitals or Special Hospitals.
(2) Long stay are those patients discharged after a stay of one year or more.

District of treatment	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
West Midlands RHA	138	156	107	137	151
Bromsgrove and Redditch	0	0	0	0	8
Herefordshire	3	0	1	0	2
Kidderminster and District	41	41	25	50	36
Worcester and District	0	0	0	0	0
Shropshire	0	0	0	1	0
Mid Staffordshire	3	0	1	0	3
North Staffordshire	13	14	6	13	8
South East Staffordshire	0	0	0	0	0
Rugby	0	0	0	0	0
North Warwickshire	30	35	21	29	37
South Warwickshire	1	10	5	14	6
Central Birmingham	0	0	0	0	0
East Birmingham	0	0	0	0	0
North Birmingham	0	0	0	0	0
South Birmingham	5	20	26	10	9
West Birmingham	0	0	0	0	0
Coventry	0	0	0	0	0
Dudley	8	5	3	7	14
Sandwell	0	0	0	0	0
Solihull	3	3	5	3	4
Walsall	31	25	14	10	24
Wolverhampton	0	0	0	0	0

Notes:
(1) Excludes deaths and transfers to other hospitals and Special Hospitals.
(2) Long stay are those patients discharged after a stay of one year or more.

District of treatment	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Mersey RHA	83	102	119	98	132
Chester	0	2	0	0	0
Crewe	18	19	15	21	17

District of treatment	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Halton	0	2	2	5	2
Macclesfield	5	5	13	10	30
Warrington	4	17	57	35	27
Liverpool	0	0	0	0	0
St. Helens and Knowsley	0	0	0	0	0
Southport and Forsby	50	31	15	12	23
South Sefton	0	0	0	0	0
Wirral	0	14	3	4	14

Notes:

(1) Excludes deaths and transfers to other hospitals and Special hospitals.

(2) Long stay are those patients discharged after a stay of one year or more.

District of treatment	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
North Western RHA	105	101	96	144	141
Lancaster	36	26	26	42	33
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	0	0	0	0	0
Preston	0	0	0	0	0
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	31	46	24	52	34
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	29	22	40	43	45
West Lancashire	2	4	4	0	9
Chorley and South Ribble	0	0	0	0	0
Bolton	0	0	0	0	0
Bury	0	0	0	0	0
North Manchester	0	0	0	0	0
Central Manchester	0	0	0	0	0
South Manchester	0	0	0	0	0
Oldham	0	0	0	0	0
Rochdale	0	0	0	0	0
Salford	2	1	2	0	0
Stockport	5	2	0	7	16
Tameside and Glossop	0	0	0	0	0
Trafford	0	0	0	0	0
Wigan	0	0	0	0	0

Notes:

(1) Excludes deaths and transfers to other hospitals and special hospitals.

(2) Long stay are those patients discharged after a stay of one year or more.

Abortion

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions have been performed on girls under the age of 16 years at Kettering general hospital in each year since 1968 in actual and in percentage terms: and what are the national percentage figures.

Mr. Freeman: The figures for England and Wales and the readily available data for usual residents of Kettering district health authority are shown in the tables.

Number of abortions performed in England and Wales, to those under 16 years, 27 April 1968 to 31 December 1987

Year	Total A	Under 16 B	Percent. B of A
1968	23,641	553	2·3
1969	54,819	1,231	2·2
1970	86,565	1,822	2·1
1971	126,777	2,618	2·1
1972	159,884	3,320	2·1
1973	167,149	3,660	2·2
1974	162,940	3,948	2·4
1975	139,702	4,006	2·9
1976	129,673	3,835	3·0
1977	133,004	4,067	3·1
1978	141,558	3,724	2·6
1979	149,746	3,856	2·6
1980	160,903	4,143	2·6
1981	162,480	3,949	2·4
1982	163,045	4,343	2·7
1983	162,161	4,566	2·8
1984	169,993	4,609	2·7
1985	171,873	4,427	2·6
1986	172,286	4,240	2·5
1987	174,276	4,075	2·3
Total	2,812,475	70,992	2·5

Number of abortions to usual residents of Kettering District Health Authority, under 16 years, 1983-87

1983	500	28	5·6
1984	526	31	5·9
1985	557	27	4·8
1986	550	23	4·2
1987	604	19	3·1

Warrington Drug Dependency Clinic

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of people treated within Warrington drug dependency clinic in the latest available year.

Mr. Freeman: Responsibility for local services rests with the local statutory authorities. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Warrington health authority since the information he has requested is not held centrally.

Medical Services (Durham)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement concerning the future of the chiropody service within the district of Durham.

Mr. Freeman: The provision of chiropody services in Durham is the responsibility of Durham district health authority. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of Durham DHA for the information he requires.

"Drug Tariff"

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the monthly issue by the Department of Health of the publication "Drug Tariff" costs; and what consideration he has given to circulating this information more cheaply.

Mr. Freeman: Information on the cost of production of the "Drug Tariff" is commercially confidential, but I can assure my hon. Friend that the work has been put out to competitive tender by HMSO and awarded to the cheapest tenderer.

Whitley Councils

Mr. Wood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will lay before the House the Government's responses to the third report of the Social Services Committee of 1988-89 on Whitley councils.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend has done so today.

Census Test

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the analysis of the proportion of householders in each census test area who returned a completed form is now available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Full evaluation of the test will take some time, but the analysis referred to is now available. Of those households recorded as present on census test night, 60 per cent. returned a completed form. The response rates for each area in the test were as follows.

Test area in:	*Response (per cent.)*
Wandsworth and Merton	54
Birmingham	42
Scarborough	73
Berwickshire	94
East Lothian	89
Edinburgh	75

In general, response rates were in line with expectations based on the results of previous voluntary census tests. The test areas were chosen to cover a variety of circumstances and the variation in response rates reflects differences in such factors as the difficulty of contacting householders and of recruiting enumerators.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 13 July 1989

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Selective Investment Brokers Ltd.

Sir Charles Morrison: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what negotiations or discussions his Department had with third parties about the affairs of Selective Investment Brokers Ltd., between January 1985 and June 1986.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 5 July 1989]:* None. The company was mentioned in the context of investigations into Wessex Trust conducted by the Wiltshire police at the request of the Director of Public Prosecutions in the course of which assistance was provided by my Department.

Industrial Location

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what action he has taken to persuade European companies to locate in the United Kingdom in the light of the opening of the Channel tunnel and the advent of the single market in 1992;

(2) what advice he has given to European companies on the advantages of the Channel tunnel in attracting investment in the United Kingdom from Europe.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 11 July 1989]:* The DTI's Invest in Britain Bureau organises a number of commercially sponsored seminars in Europe each year aimed at attracting investment into the United Kingdom generally and highlighting the benefits of the assisted areas.

In promoting the United Kingdom as the "Preferred Location" it draws on a wide range of selling points which include its competitive wage rates, low social on-costs, low corporate taxation, skilled work force, membership of the Community, the impending completion of the single European market, the already good connections to the mainland, particularly from the east coast ports and the enhanced physical communications that will be brought about by the completion of the Channel tunnel.

Opium Derivatives

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the supply of opium derivatives is to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude *[pursuant to his reply, 20 April 1989, c. 254-260]:* As recommended by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, we shall work towards the creation of a single EC market in opium derivatives. We envisage the development of reciprocal arrangements among EC countries for both promoting and supervising trade between them in these and other narcotic drugs, taking account of production within the Community and imports from elsewhere.

Shipyards

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement outlining the powers of the European Economic Commission in relation to investment proposals for shipyards, with particular reference to proposals to re-open shipyards.

Mr. Newton: If shipbuilding were to resume at North East Shipbuilders Ltd. without their agreement, the Commission would be in a position to take infraction proceedings against the United Kingdom under article 85 of the treaty of Rome. The Commission could also open a procedure under article 93(2) of the treaty of Rome into all matters notified last December. As a result of such a procedure the Commission could require state aid that they decided was outwith the terms of the sixth directive on aid to shipbuilding to be repaid.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government concerning companies seeking to re-open shipyards owned by British Shipbuilders without intervention assistance, being required to submit proposals.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my statement today.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has consulted the European Economic Community Commission on proposals ro reopen shipyards when the purchasers were not seeking any intervention assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: In December 1988 the Government notified their intention to close North East Shipbuilders Limited as part of a package covering all aspects of support for the corporation under the sixth directive on aid to shipbuilding with the exception of the terms for the disposal of Govan which had already been cleared. The Commission took the closure into account in deciding not to raise objection to the extensive assistance that British Shipbuilders had required and to the manner in which the Government proposed to deal with this. Any proposal for a return to shipbuilding at North East Shipbuilders Limited would give the Commission grounds for re-opening all the matters cleared last December. In these circumstances we could only proceed sensibly on the basis of consulting the Commission about possible proposals.

CIVIL SERVICE

Plain English

Mr. Mans: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether there has been any progress made in efforts in the Civil Service to produce documents in plain English and to reduce redundancy of forms and their contents.

Mr. Luce: Since the Government's forms initiative began in 1982, Departments have made good progress in producing forms and leaflets which are easier to understand and simpler to complete. A review of the forms that the Government send to business has recently been carried out by my office. This makes recommendations to reduce the numbers of forms sent out, and to make those

that remain clearer and easier to complete. Copies of the review report have been placed in the Libraries of the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what progress has been made on achieving equality of opportunity within the Civil Service for women and those from the ethnic minorities.

Mr. Luce: We are making good progress in this area. My Department will, next week, publish a report on progress achieved in implementing the programme of action to increase equality of opportunity for women in the Civil Service. This shows that opportunities for combining a family and a career are improving, and that we are seeing more women in middle and top management jobs. As I told the House on 22 May, a similar programme of action to increase equality of opportunity for ethnic minority staff and applicants is currently being drawn up in consultation with departments.

Agency Status

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many branches of the Civil Service now have agency status; and in which Departments.

Mr. Richard Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1989]:* A total of eight Government activities have been set up as executive agencies. These are:

Agency	*Department*
Vehicle inspectorate	Department of Transport
Companies House	Department of Trade and Industry
HMSO	
National weights and measures laboratory	Department of Trade and Industry
Warren Spring laboratory	Department of Trade and Industry
Resettlement agency	Department of Social Security
Civil Service College	Office of the Minister for the Civil Service
QEII conference centre	Property Services Agency

I shall be making a full progress report to the House shortly.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Bank of England (Privatisation)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to privatise the Bank of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The Government have no plans to privatise the Bank of England.

Civil Service Pensions

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether changes are planned in the occupational pension arrangements for part-time staff working in the Civil Service.

Mr. Brooke: New, more flexible pension arrangements for part-time staff, most of whom are women, are to be introduced from 1 January 1990. They will provide greater opportunity for part-time staff to earn pension benefits. The new arrangements complement the alternative working patterns initiative, and will help the Civil Service to tap into sources of skilled and experienced staff who may hitherto have been deterred by the traditional working pattern. The changes will also enable useful simplification of administrative procedures to be made.

Civil Servants (Transfers)

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement about the arrangements for making advances of salary available to civil servants who have to move their homes as a result of being transferred in the public interest to a new place of work.

Mr. Brooke: A civil servant who has to move home on transfer in the public interest to a new place of work may be eligible for an advance of salary. Under the current arrangements an advance may be made if the net proceeds of the sale of the existing property, if any, and the maximum mortgage available from commercial sources are not sufficient to cover the cost of a suitable property at the new station. The current maximum advance payable within upper and lower limits is six months' pay. The limits were last revised in 1981. The upper limit is £9,500 with a further £1,000 for transfers into London.

The arrangements have recently been reviewed in the light of changes in the property market and in salaries since 1981. The intention is to allow departments more flexibility in making advances on transfer. It will no longer be an essential requirement, for example, that the individual should first obtain the maximum commercial mortgage. It is also proposed that the maximum advance should be six months' pay, as previously, but that the limits expressed in cash terms should be abolished.

Rationalisation Schemes

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recommendations have been made by the inter-departmental committee set up to consider whether Dep^ tments should enjoy a share of benefits accruing from rationalisation schemes and disposals of property declared surplus.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

At present, receipts from the disposal of Government civil property are in general accounted for by the PSA and accrue to the Exchequer. From 1 April 1990, responsibility for the existing civil estate will be divided between individual Departments and the PSA, as announced in the statement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 25 May 1988, *Official Report*, column 339. From that date, individual Departments will account for receipts in respect of disposals from their departmental estates and will seek permission from the Treasury to reapply all or part of proceeds to other parts of their programme offering good

value for money. The same arrangements apply to the PSA which will have responsibility for the common user element of the civil estate and could involve assistance to Departments that have had to move in order to create worthwhile rationalisation opportunities. This issue is among the matters kept under review by the official level interdepartmental committee which deals with accommodation matters generally on the Government's civil estate.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Serious Fraud Squad

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General what reasons have been given to the serious fraud squad by the Egyptian authorities for their refusal to provide papers relating to Mr. Fayed; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Investigations into allegations that criminal offences have been committed by Mr. Fayed are continuing. It would not be appropriate for me to provide more specific information.

Malicious Communications Act 1988

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General, how many prosecutions there have been under the Malicious Communications Act 1988; and what was their outcome.

The Attorney-General: I regret that such information is not held centrally, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Bevan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs have been created in the last five years in the United Kingdom and in the European Community as a whole.

Mr. Cope: Employment estimates are not yet available for many EC countries after 1987. The table shows the data requested for the five-year period from 1982 to 1987.

Civilian Employment
(figures in thousands)

	1982	*1987*	*Change*	*Percentage Change*
United Kingdom[1]	23,584	25,060	+1,476	+6·3
Rest of EC	97,569	98,920	+1,351	+1·4

[1]Over the five-year period 1983 to 1988 the rise was 11·1 per cent. for the United Kingdom.
Source: United Kingdom(DE) Rest of EC(Eurostat)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the percentage reduction in employment in the manufacturing industry sector in the north-west from 1979 to 1988.

Mr. Lee: Between June 1979 and June 1988 the number of employees in employment in the manufacturing industry sector in the North West region fell by 36 per cent.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been unemployed for 12 months or more in the constituencies of *(a)* Burnley, *(b)* Pendle, *(c)* Hyndburn, *(d)* Rossendale and *(e)* Darwen.

Mr. Lee: The information is available from the Library. The following table shows for each parliamentary constituency requested, the number of unemployed claimants who had been unemployed for 12 months or more in April 1989, the latest available date.

Long-Term Unemployed Claimants—April 1989

Parliamentary constituency	*Unemployed over 12 months*
Burnley	1,188
Pendle	714
Hyndburn	650
Rossendale and Darwen	532

Industrial Action (Public Services)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration he has given to amending industrial relations law to deal with unofficial industrial action taken by those providing vital public services.

Mr. Nicholls: Recent industrial action in certain public sector services has been irresponsible and unnecessary. The Government are considering what needs to be done to protect the public interest, and we shall not hesitate to come forward with appropriate proposals for legislation if that proves necessary.

Social Charter

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what advice he has received from the EEC Commission about the numbers and scope of directives which it intends to propose under the social charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The European Commission have put forward a preliminary draft proposal for a Community charter of fundamental social rights, which they suggest should be adopted by a solemn declaration of all 12 heads of state and Government. The Commission's preliminary draft of the proposal includes an invitation to the Commission to draw up a programme of work by June 1990. No details of such a programme have been received from the Commission.

Trade Union Safety Representatives

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current estimated number of trade union safety representatives as defined by the 1977 Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations under the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act; and what was the number in 1978.

Mr. Nicholls: The health and Safety Executive does not keep records of the number of trade union safety representatives, but the Trades Union Congress currently estimates the numbers to be between 90,000 and 100,000.

My right hon. Friend has no reason to believe that this number has changed significantly since 1978.

Industrial Accidents

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps is he taking to deal with the increase in accidents in construction, agriculture and forestry.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Commission's plan of work for 1989-90 and beyond approved in April by my right hon. Friend contains a number of extra measures designed to stimulate improvements in the health and safety performance of the construction, agricultural and associated industries. For construction these include reaching a target of 100 inspectors engaged on inspection in 1990, targeting inspections on the more hazardous activities and on the quality of site management, preparing new regulations to improve the management of health and safety on construction sites. Similarly for agriculture these include allocating additional resources to the agricultural inspectorate to be targeted primarily on high risk premises, certification of agricultural pesticide users under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986, and new guidance on obligations under these and related regulations.

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any further plans to tackle the problems of under-reporting of accidents to the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: One and a half million copies of HSE's leaflet "Report that accident" have been distributed since 1987. The recent construction blitz campaign reminded small contractors of their reporting obligations. Also, in May and June 1988 an advertising campaign was directed specifically at under-reporting in the footwear and clothing industries and the timber and wooded furniture industries.

Tourism

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment following his announcement about the future of tourism, which bodies will deal with strategic marketing and marketing policy.

Mr. Lee: The British Tourist Authority, the national and English regional tourist boards will carry out these functions.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how his announcement of his tourism review will affect the distribution of marketing functions between the British Tourist Authority and the national tourist boards.

Mr. Lee: There will be no change in the distribution of marketing functions.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will now place in the Library a full copy of the tourism review carried out by his officials and PA Consulting Group.

Mr. Lee: No. The report was an internal document which provided a basis for the decisions which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced last week.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which of the operations of the British Tourist Authority he envisages as being suitable for movement into the private sector.

Mr. Lee: A range of activities will be considered.

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the top 20 tourist attractions in the South-West in numbers visiting or attending; and if he will indicate the numbers, in each instance, for the previous comparable year.

Mr. Lee: The English tourist board's annual survey of visits to attractions gives the following figures for the West Country regional tourist board area in 1987 and 1988.

	Number of visits	
	1987	*1988*
Roman baths and pump room, Bath	873,414	954,142
English Riviera centre, Torquay	275,000	645,000
Stonehenge	617,295	640,416
Buckfast abbey	n.a.	574,389
Bristol zoo	575,000	571,679
Dartington cider press centre	480,000	561,000
Babbacombe model village	490,000	495,000
Paignton pier	n.a.	465,000
Cheddar caves	n.a.	400,000
Wells cathedral	400,000	360,000
Paignton zoo	343,229	351,398
Exeter cathedral	300,000	347,484
Wookey Hole caves	304,690	332,824
Clovelly village	312,000	327,000
Cricket St. Thomas wildlife park	308,990	303,826
Bristol City museum and art gallery	252,504	280,850
Arnolfini gallery, Bristol	400,000	280,590
National shire horse centre	250,000	275,000
Devonshire's centre	200,000	264,500
Sea life centre, Weymouth	n.a.	250,000
Truro cathedral	250,000	250,000

European Social Fund

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what allocation the United Kingdom has been awarded by the European social fund for 1989; and how much had been allocated to each region.

Mr. Cope: The Commission of the European Communities has confirmed that for 1989 the United Kingdom has been allocated £418 million towards employment and training schemes from the European social fund. This represents 18·14 per cent. of the fund's budget and means that the United Kingdom is once again receiving more than any other Community member state.

The regional breakdown is as follows:

	£
The North	22,125,684
Yorkshire and Humberside	20,755,226
East midlands	6,599,478
West midlands	21,444,259
East Anglia	418,785
South East	18,083,103
South West	2,535,074
North West	33,362,018
Scotland	31,083,672
Wales	18,929,242

	£
Northern Ireland	44,920,275
Schemes operating in more than one region[1]	197,744,854
Total	418,001,670

[1] Including Government, industrial training boards and nationalised industry programmes.

Co-operative Development Agency

Mr. Maples: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what decisions have been reached on the future of the Co-operative Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The ceiling of financial provision available to support the CDA under current legislation will be reached in 1990-91, and we have been considering whether there is a case for any further support.

The CDA itself considered the issue and proposed that it should become a body mainly devoted to the promotion of employee share ownership, particularly employee share ownership plans. It proposed that its existing role in providing a central forum for co-operative development should be drawn from and financed by those using it, and that much of its work to promote co-operative development could now be carried out by other organisations.

The Government are firmly in favour of measures to extend the financial participation of employees in their employing organisations but we see no need for public support for another body to promote ESOPs, when there are a number of private organisations interested and active in this field. The Government did, however, agree with the CDA's view that its original remit could now be carried out by other organisations. We therefore consulted relevant organisations in the co-operative movement seeking their comments on a proposal to wind up the CDA by the time its current grant ceiling is reached.

Fourteen organisations commented. A number were opposed to closure, largely on the grounds that the CDA should continue to provide a central focus for co-operative development; others pointed to the overlap between the CDA's work and their own. Careful consideration of all the comments made has confirmed our view that the work of the CDA has now reached the stage where it can be carried on by the well-established network of local agencies and other business support bodies, including the new training and enterprise councils which will include co-operatives as well as other forms of business in their plans for enterprise support. We do not consider that co-operative organisations need a Government-sponsored body to co-ordinate or represent them or to take on new functions.

Our decision is therefore that the agency's life should not be extended when current funding runs out. We propose to wind up the agency by order, under the affirmative resolution procedure, during the next parliamentary session. The Government will continue to take a keen interest in co-operatives, which we see as one expression of the fast developing enterprise culture in Britain.

I would like to express my appreciation to the chairman, director, board and staff of the CDA for the enthusiasm and commitment that they have shown. They have achieved a good deal over the past 11 years and deserve credit for a job well done.

Unofficial Strikes

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to curb unofficial strikes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Recent industrial action in certain public sector services has been irresponsible and unnecessary. The Government is considering what needs to be done to protect the public interest, and will not hesitate to come forward with appropriate proposals for legislation if that proves necessary.

WALES

Welsh Health Authority

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what inflation assumptions were built into Welsh health authority budget allocations for the fiscal year 1989-90 and plans for fiscal year 1990-91 and 1991-92;

(2) what was *(a)* the hospital and community health services' pay and price deflator for Wales, for each fiscal year since 1979, *(b)* the inflation assumption used in National Health Service budget plans in each year from 1978-79 to 191-92 and *(c)* the gross domestic product deflator for Wales for each year from 1978-79.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested cannot be provided exactly in the form asked for. The table shows in column 1 the percentage increase in hospital and community health services pay and prices; the figures are based on English data as no information is collected in Wales. The second column shows the provision for inflation made in district health authorities' initial revenue allocations each year. Because the figures relate to allocations made at the beginning of each year, they do not take account of any supplementary funding made available in year to meet the excess costs of pay awards (mainly for review bodies staff) over and above the initial inflation allowance. They are not therefore comparable with the figures in column 1. Each health authority makes its own plans for inflation in setting its budget for the year ahead; however, these details are not held centrally.

	Col. 1 Annual percentage. Increase in Hospital and Community Health Services pay and prices (England)	*Col. 2 Welsh DHA Revenue Allocations: Inflation Assumptions*[2]	*Col. 3 Annual percentage. Increase in GDP (Wales)*[3]
1978-79	9·6	9·0[4]	12·1
1979-80	20·5	7·9[4]	14·8
1980-81	28·0	24·8[4]	13·2

	Col. 1 Annual percentage. Increase in Hospital and Community Health Services pay and prices (England)	Col. 2 Welsh DHA Revenue Allocations: Inflation Assumptions[2]	Col. 3 Annual percentage. Increase in GDP (Wales)[3]
1981-82	8·2	7·2[4]	10·7
1982-83	6·5	4 per cent. pay 9 per cent. prices	11·5
1983-84	5·1	6·0	9·7
1984-85	5·8	3 per cent. pay 5 per cent. prices	2·3
1985-86	5·2	3 per cent. pay 4 per cent. prices	14·9
1986-87	6·9	4·5	6·7
1987-88	8·5	3·75	7·7
1988-89	10·5	4·5	[1]—
1989-90	[1]—	5·0	[1]—
1990-91	[1]—	4·0[5]	[1]—
1991-92	[1]—	3·0[5]	[1]—

[1] Projected figures are not available.
[2] Inflation assumptions as contained in the initial recurrent revenue allocations to DHAs.
[3] The information provided relates to calendar years. The figure for 1987-88 is provisional and projections for subsequent years are not available.
[4] Prior to the introduction of cash planning in 1982-83 the inflation allowances made available to health authorities in each financial year reflected the full year effect on spending of forecast increases in pay and prices in the previous November to March and the full and part year effect of further increases forecast to occur during the course of the financial year.
[5] Based on Her Majesty's Treasury forecast of the increase in the gross domestic product deflator.

Tourist Board

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consequences are envisaged for the Wales Tourist Board as the result of the announcements contained in the reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley, (Mr. Bevan) by the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield, (Mr. Fowler) on 6 July, *Official Report*, column *278;* and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No direct consequences are envisaged for the Wales tourist board. The more effective arrangements for promoting Britain overseas will provide the board, working with the industry, with the opportunity to increase visitor numbers to Wales in collaboration with the British Tourist Authority.

Mountain Lane School

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will allocate extra funds to Clwyd local education authority to enable the authority to supply an extra mobile classroom at Mountain Lane school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. Clwyd local education authority must decide their priorities for the use of the capital resources available to them. Capital provision for education in Wales was increased by 11 per cent. in 1989-90.

House Repair Grant

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales why there was a delay of a month in notification to Welsh local authorities of changes in the amount of mandatory repairs grant from 75 per cent. to 20 per cent. for landlords under sections 130 and 131 of the Housing Act 1988.

Mr. Peter Walker: My officials wrote to Welsh Local authorities notifying them of the statutory instrument and that an explanatory circular was in preparation as soon as was practicable after the House approved the draft order. The letter issued on 10 January and the order came into effect on 19 January.

Beach Pollution

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will pay an official visit to the beaches along the Welsh side of the Bristol channel to observe the degree of pollution apparent both on the beach and in the sea.

Mr. Peter Walker: Monitoring of bathing waters is the responsibility of the appropriate water authority.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Cambodia

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what preparations he is making to restore Government-to-Government aid in Cambodia in the light of the anticipated Vietnamese withdrawal.

Mr. Chris Patten: We keep our policy on aid to Cambodia under regular review. Decisions cannot be taken before Vietnam ends it illegal occupation and an acceptable political settlement is in place.

Overseas Aid and Development

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will next meet his ministerial colleagues of the European Community to discuss overseas development policy and the level of overseas assistance.

Mr. Chris Patten: At the next Development Council of Ministers in November, when I expect to discuss a wide range of Community development policy questions.

Yemen

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the extra aid given to the People's Democratic Republic of the Yemen as a result of the floods earlier in 1989.

Mr. Chris Patten: We gave relief assistance totalling £179,000 in response to this emergency. This aid took the form of tents, blankets, foodstuffs, water purification tablets and vehicles.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Departmental Costs

Mr. Boswell: To ask the secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the running cost limit for the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Department.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The running cost limit for 1989-90 for the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments is being set at £543·03 million. Further details of provision for individual Departments are set out in the appropriate Estimates volumes.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Statutory Instruments

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the numbers of statutory instruments issued by each Government Department in each of the last five years indicating how many were subject to affirmative procedure and how many to negative procedure.

Mr. Wakeham: The information is not held centrally in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cambodia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings his Department's representatives has had with *(a)* the Government of Kampuchea, *(b)* the Government of Vietnam, *(c)* the Khmer Rouge and *(d)* Prince Sihanouk.

Mr. Eggar: We have no dealings with the so-called Government of Kampuchea or with the Khmer Rouge. We have regular contact with the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam through our respective embassies. My noble Friend the Minister of State, Lord Glenarthur, paid the first ever visit by a British Minister to the SRV. from 9 to 14 April 1989. Most recently, the Vietnamese Foreign Minister called on my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend the Minister of State on 28 June 1989. We have regular meetings with Prince Sihanouk and his representatives. The Prince saw my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend he Secretary of State during his visit to London in October 1988.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who will be the United Kingdom's representatives at the Paris conference on the future of Cambodia.

Mr. Eggar: The composition of the United Kingdom delegation to the international conference on Cambodia in Paris, to which formal invitations have yet to be issued, has not yet been decided. But we expect to be invited and to play an active part.

Nuclear Weapons (Testing)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government's plan to respond to the proposal made by the Soviet Union on 24 June that a global moratorium be implemented on the testing of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The Soviet proposal is not a new one. A moratorium would not be compatible with our policy on the testing of nuclear weapons which was set out by the then Minister of State, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), in answer to a question on 27 June 1988.

Cyprus

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the number of times Ministers have had discussions about the Cyprus problem with President Vassiliou and the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, Mr. Raul Denktash, respectively, since the last presidential elections in Cyprus.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has discussed the Cyprus problem with President Vassiliou on five occasions since his election in February 1988. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs was present at two of those meetings and has also met Mr. Vassiliou separately on three other occasions. I attended one of those meetings and have also met the President twice separately. For reasons that are well known to the House, Mr. Denktash has not been received by Ministers during that period.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans exist to ensure the safe disposal of both chlorofluorocarbon refrigerant material and chlorofluorocarbon II in the foam in refrigeration and air-cooling equipment under the control of his Department.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given today by the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley).

Vietnamese Boat People

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what finance has been made available to the Hong Kong authorities for the care and settlement of Vietnamese boat people over each of the last five years.

Mr. Eggar: The following funds have been made available to the Hong Kong Government for the care of

the Vietnamese boat people from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)'s general programme:

	US$ million
1985	4·3
1986	4·8
1987	4·5
1988	9·2
1989 (to date)	7·0

In addition to our regular contributions to the UNHCR's general programme, we have also contributed the following funds to UNHCR for specific Hong Kong purposes:

	£ million
1988	1·1
1989	7·1

We have also pledged this year £4·5 million directly to the Hong Kong Government for emergency accommodation, and £5 million towards the cost of a planned refugee processing centre in the Philippines which would accommodate Vietnamese refugees now in Hong Kong.

Falkland Islands

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present permanent population of the Falkland Islands; and what were the figures for the last five years.

Mr. Eggar: At the last census held on 16 November 1986, the population of the Falkland Islands was 1,916. At the 1980 census, the population was 1,813. No other figures are available.

Hong Kong

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people formerly resident in Hong Kong and all associated territories and holding British passports have been accepted for permanent settlement into the United Kingdom in each year since 1979.

Mr. Renton: I have been asked to reply:

The numbers of British dependent territory citizens from Hong Kong accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom in the years 1979-88 are published in table 22 of the 1987 and 1988 editions of the annual Command Paper "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom" (Cm. 415 and Cm. 726), copies of which are in the Library.

DEFENCE

Toxic Waste

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last had a meeting with the chief inspector of Her Majesty's pollution inspectorate to discuss the future programme for the existing radioactive and toxic wastes arising from the defence programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend has had no recent meeting with the director of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution or his chief inspectors, but officials are in frequent contact with staff of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, in addition to their attendance at periodic inter departmental official meetings chaired by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any Ministry of Defence site has ever violated environmental regulations agreed with Her Majesty's pollution inspectorate, the Department of Health and Transport, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Welsh and Scottish Offices, or the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, in regard to the storage, transport or disposal of radioactive and toxic wastes.

Mr. Sainsbury: Although the Ministry of Defence as a Crown Department has immunity from certain regulations, it seeks to observe standards which are no less stringent than those required of civil operators. Unfortunately, accidents occur from time to time and may for example lead to minor dispersals of toxic or radioactive materials in contravention of the "agreements" reached with regulatory Departments. All such incidents are reported to the regulatory authorities, fully investigated and measures taken to avoid their recurrence.

Venture Glider

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has reached a decision on the type of motor glider selected to replace the Venture at volunteer gliding schools.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. A decision is expected very shortly.

Explosive Devices (Coastal Waters)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list, by geographical area, the number of second world war explosive devices which have been discovered in British coastal waters in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Precise records of the number of such finds in each of the past ten years are not maintained. Each year, however, some 30 or 40 mines and 100 torpedoes, bombs or large calibre shells of world war I or world war II origin are found in British coastal waters.

Tornado Crash (RAF Akrotiri)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the crash of a Tornado aircraft at RAF Akrotiri on 4 July.

Mr. Neubert: On 4 July a Tornado F3 aircraft (tail number ZE 834) of No. 23 squadron, RAF Leeming, on detachment to RAF Akrotiri, suffered a collapsed nosewheel on landing after a routine training mission. Both crew members ejected successfully sustaining only minor injuries. The aircraft came to rest just off the runway. The extent of the damage sustained in this accident has not yet been established.

Environmental Pollution

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to conduct a full environmental pollution audit of the military nuclear fuel cycle, including

data from countries where the uranium used in the United Kingdom programme was mined and milled; and if he will publish the results at the earliest possible date.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. The environmental impact of the processing of nuclear materials in the defence nuclear programme for which this department is responsible has been evaluated and conforms fully with United Kingdom legislative requirements. As regards standards in overseas countries, I have nothing to add to the reply I gave on 9 February at column *766* to the hon. Member for Meirionydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas).

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if radioactive wastes arising from the deployment of United Kingdom's nuclear forces abroad on land or at sea is *(a)* disposed of in foreign countries or *(b)* returned to the United Kingdom for disposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 25 January 1989 at column *653*. Contingency arrangements exist for the handling of radioactive wastes arising, either on a routine or emergency basis, from United Kingdom military operations overseas. The decision between disposal abroad under locally approved arrangements and return to the United Kingdom depends on circumstances; it would not be in the national interest to elaborate.

Low Flying

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to deploy regularly a Skyguard fire control radar system to monitor the heights of low flying aircraft in areas of urban concentration such as Swansea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: No.

Near-Miss (West Germany)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the recent incident involving an RAF Phantom based at Wildenrath in West Germany having to take evasive action to avoid collision with a Canberra aircraft.

Mr. Neubert: On 6 July, during a routine training sortie, a RAF Phantom based at RAF Wildenrath in West Germany took evasive action to avoid a RAF Canberra aircraft operating in the same area. The Phantom navigator, believing the aircraft to be in danger, ejected successfully, suffering minor injuries. Neither aircraft was damaged. The Phantom returned to land safely at RAF Wildenrath. A unit inquiry into the incident has been convened.

RAF Upper Heyford

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 13 June, *Official Report*, column 689 he will give details of the assessment made following design work carried out at Royal Air Force Upper Heyford.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 18 April 1989 at column *111*. No decisions have been taken to proceed with these projects but preliminary design work commissioned from the PSA in August 1988 indicates that the estimated costs of modifying the facilities at RAF Upper Heyford would be as follows:

	£ million
Additions to the flight simulator facility	1·0
Additions to the engine shop	1·2
Additions to the avionics maintenance shop	1·7

Birkbeck College

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why inaccurate information about Birkbeck college was given to the *Sunday Times* and the *Mail on Sunday* on Saturday 1 July by officials of his Department; what action is being taken against those responsible; what arrangements are being made to help repair the potential damage done to Birkbeck's reputation; and what changes are being made in the personnel and organisation of his Department's press office.

Mr. Sainsbury: On the evening of Friday 30 June officials were asked to check the facts concerning any Ministry of Defence contracts with Birkbeck college. In an effort to be helpful, and in the limited time available, they did their best to do so. Nothing that was said confirmed the assertions made in the subsequent press reports. Changes in the MOD press office are neither called for nor planned.

My noble Friend Lord Trefgarne wrote to the noble Baroness, Lady Blackstone, Master of Birkbeck College, on 6 July explaining that the MOD was entirely satisfied with the work that the college was doing and that no papers had been recalled on security grounds.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist to ensure the safe disposal of both chlorofluorocarbon refrigerant materials and chlorofluorocarbon II in the foam in refrigeration and air-cooling equipment under the control of his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given today by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment.

Headquarter Contracts

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the total amounts paid by his Department in respect of headquarter contracts to United Kingdom-based contractors in each of the six years up to 31 March.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* Total payments made in respect of headquarters contracts to United Kingdom-based contractors in each of the six years to 31 March 1989 were as follows:

	£ million
1983-84	6,212
1984-85	6,879
1985-86	7,260

	£ million
1986-87	7,501
1987-88	8,316
1988-89	8,041

PRIME MINISTER

Local Government

Q11. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding local government.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has received representations about a number of matters relating to local government.

Nuclear Energy

Q19. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received any recent representations regarding nuclear energy.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has received a number of letters from members of the public about various aspects of nuclear energy.

National Heritage

Q32. **Sir Hugh Rossi:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding the national heritage.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister receives representations frequently. The national heritage is vital to the quality of life. Since 1979 Government expenditure on the national heritage has increased by more than 75 per cent. in real terms.

Legal Reform

Q53. **Mr. Malins:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding the new proposals for reform of the legal profession.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has received a number of representations on the Government's consultation papers, which were published with a view to seeing that the public has the best possible access to legal services of sound quality.

NHS Reform

Q58. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has had on the National Health Service White Paper.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health has received some 8,500 representations on the White Paper; many correspondents give strong support for its objectives and endorse its proposals.

Part-time Work

Q75. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding part-time work.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister receives representations about part-time working from time to time.

I know that the Select Committee on Employment is currently undertaking an inquiry into part-time working and I look forward to its report when it becomes available.

Human Rights (USSR)

Q108. **Sir Anthony Grant:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding human rights in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

We receive many representations which reflect the deep concern in this country about human rights in the Soviet Union. We are continuing to press the Soviet authorities over a range of individual cases, and over the wider need for institutionalised reform. These efforts do bear fruit. In the past year, 68 refusenik cases which we have raised have been resolved satisfactorily.

Human Rights (China)

Q115. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding human rights in China.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister received a delegation of Chinese students on 28 June. My right hon. Friend has also received a number of representations expressing shock and outrage at recent events in China. These are, of course, sentiments that the British Government share.

Rural Housing

Q127. **Mr. Goodlad:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding rural housing policy.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister receives representations on rural housing policy from time to time.

Water Privatisation

Q134. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has had on water privatisation.

Q145. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has had on water privatisation.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister receives many representations about water privatisation, which provides the best framework and conditions for achieving even higher standards of water quality.

Channel Tunnel

Q141. **Mr. Cyril Townsend:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister frequently receives representations about various aspects of the Channel tunnel.

Disabled People

Q152. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Prime Minister when Her Majesty's Government expect to publish a plain person's guide to the Disabled Persons (Services, Representation and Consultation) Act 1986.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

We have no plans to do so. Local authorities have a statutory duty to publish information about the welfare services they provide and, as a matter of good practice, we would expect them to produce this in a form which is readily understandable.

World Trade

Q170. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received in connection with world trade.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has received a number of representations about world trade. The Government will continue to combat protectionism and to work for open world markets which are of benefit to our exporters and the world economy as a whole.

Privatisation

Q191. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has had on privatisation.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister receives a number of representations from time to time regarding the privatisation programme.

Railway Strikes

Q192. **Mr. John Browne:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received representations regarding the recent train strikes.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has received a number of representations on this matter. The rail strikes are pointless and damaging and have shown no regard to the interests of passengers.

Common Agricultural Policy

Q202. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received recent representations regarding reform of the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

The Government frequently receive representations about reform of the common agricultural policy (CAP). The measures agreed at the February 1988 European Council, particularly those providing for budgetary discipline and for the stabilisation of agricultural production and expenditure, represent the most significant reforms to date. The benefits of reform are already apparent and farmers can look to the future with increasing confidence. The Government's policy is to build on those major reforms in EC negotiations and to work with our GATT partners to fulfil the commitment to achieve progressive and substantial reductions in agricultural support and protection.

Madrid Summit

Q205. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has received any recent representations regarding the Madrid summit.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

The statement my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made in this House on 29 June has been widely welcomed.

Private Currencies

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Prime Minister if she will urge her fellow Heads of Government at the world economic summit to allow private stock banks in their countries to issue their own notes and coins.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

Legal Tender Laws

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Prime Minister if she will urge her fellow Heads of Government at the world's economic summit to abolish their legal tender laws and allow competing currencies in their economies.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

Central Banks

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Prime Minister if she will urge her fellow Heads of Government to privatise their central banks.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

European Economic and Social Committee

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list in the *Official Report* the names and current qualifications of the British members of the European Economic and Social Committee.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is as follows:

Group I (Employers)

Mr. Ian Campbell, CVO—Former Vice Chairman British Railways Board, part-time member BR Board, responsible for research.

Miss Gina Dodd—Chartered Engineer (rtd).

Mr. Ken Gardner—Consultant in food and food law technology.

Mr. Colin Hancock—Management consultant; adviser to the Enterprise and Deregulation Unit of the Department of Employment; counsellor within the Small Firms Service, Department of Employment.

Mr. John de Normann—Former head of ICI Building Group; Director, Executive Committee of the National Council of Building Material Producers; Member, Board of British Standards Institution.

Mr. Bill Poeton—President of the Union of Independent Companies; chairman of the Poeton Group of Electro-plating companies.

Mr. Keith Tamlin—Director, Mail Order Traders' Association; member of Post Office Users' National Council; Member, Council of the Retail Consortium.

Mr. John Whitworth—Former Director, International Shipping Federation; Chairman, Pension Fund.

Group II (Employees)

Mr. Jack Boddy, MBE—Former Agricultural Trade Group Secretary, TGWU.

Mr. Campbell Christie—General Secretary, Scottish TUC; Chairman, Office Technology, Economic Development Committee, NEDC.

Mr. Eric Hammond, OBE—General Secretary, Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union (EETPU).

Mr. Tom Jenkins—Assistant Secretary, TUC, International Department.

Miss Ada Maddocks—National Organising Officer, NALGO.

Mr. Alec Smith—General Secretary, National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers (NUTGW).

Mr. Larry Smith, OBE—Former Executive Officer Press and Information, TGWU.

Group III (Various interests)

Mr. Wilfred Aspinall—Executive Director, Managerial, Professional and Staff Liaison Group (MPG).

Professor Bill Black—Former Professor of Economics, Queen's University, Belfast; Economic Adviser, Department of Economic Development, Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Shreela Flather, JP—Councillor and former Mayor of Windsor and Maidenhead; Member Social Security Advisory Committee; Barrister; past Member, Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Robert Moreland—Former MEP; Member, Council for Business Graduate Association.

Dr. Ann Robinson—Head of Policy Unit, Institute of Directors; former lecturer in Politics, University College Cardiff.

Mr. Graham Speirs—Former Secretary, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities; Vice Chairman, Age Concern Scotland.

Dr. Peter Storie-Pugh, CBE—Former President, Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

Mr. Michael Strauss—Co-ordinating Director—Policy, NFU.

Mrs. Alma Williams, MBE—President, National Federation of Consumer Groups; Vice President, Consumers' Association (UK); Permanent Representative to UNESCO of the International Organisation of Consumers.

Gifts

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Prime Minister why, pursuant to her answer of 10 July, she will not list all those gifts she has received in her official capacity over the past 12 months while on overseas visits.

The Prime Minister: It is not my practice to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 July.

Mr. French: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 July.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 July.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 July.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 July.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is attending the economic summit in Paris.

TRANSPORT

New Road Schemes

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the COBA criteria for construction of new roads being studied in his London transport assessment studies will apply with, or without modification, to any selected road schemes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Any road scheme arising from the London assessment studies will be appraised using the Department's normal scheme appraisal methodology. This includes a full economic and environmental assessment.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what significance is attached to saving in journey time in current COBA assessments of new road schemes; and what weighting is given therein to design speeds of new roads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: User benefits on COBA are derived from savings in journey times on links and at junctions, accidents and vehicle operating costs. In a representative scheme 90 per cent. of the benefits could be attributable to time savings. Design speeds are consistent with the anticipated vehicle speeds on the road and are contained in Department of Transport departmental standard TD9/81, "Road Layout and Geometry: Highway Link Design."

A43

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he hopes to announce the preferred route for the A43 Silverstone bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are giving careful consideration to route options to the east or west of the village. The choice is difficult. We hope to announce the preferred route soon.

Crash Barriers

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many road accidents in the last five years have involved a vehicle crashing through a crash barrier on the central reservation of a motorway or a dual carriageway road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table shows the number of accidents on motorways or dual carriageway roads in which at least one vehicle left the carriageway offside on to the central reservation. The number of accidents is broken down by whether the vehicle entering the central reservation hit the central crash barrier, and whether it crossed the central reserve.

The number of accidents in which a vehicle crossed the central reserve after hitting the central crash barrier increased from 94 in 1983 to 118 in 1987, and increase of 26 per cent. This is partly due to the installation of more crash barriers, as reflected in an increase of 54 per cent. in the number of accidents where a vehicle hit the central barrier, but only 12 per cent. where no central barrier was involved.

Accidents involving a vehicle leaving the carriageway onto central reservation: Great Britain, 1983-1987

Number of accidents where at least one vehicle left the carriageway offside onto the central reservation	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*Percentage change 1987-83*
Vehicle hit central barrier						
Stayed on reservation or rebounded	579	767	752	844	918	59
Crossed central reservation	94	87	90	115	118	26
Total	669	852	834	953	1,031	54
Vehicle did not hit central barrier						
Stayed on reservation or rebounded	1,414	1,509	1,572	1,585	1,545	9
Crossed central reservation	600	755	710	754	720	20
Total	1,990	2,231	2,254	2,299	2,236	12
All accidents						
Stayed on reservation or rebounded	1,993	2,276	2,324	2,429	2,463	24
Crossed central reservation	694	842	800	869	838	21
Total	2,659	3,083	3,088	3,252	3,267	23

Note.—Because some accidents will have involved more than one vehicle, the totals are less than the sum of their constituent parts.

The following table shows the number of accidents involving vehicles on motorways or dual carriageway roads, from 1983 to 1987, where the vehicle either crossed the central reservation or the vehicle hit the central crash barrier and crossed the central reservation.

Number of accidents

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Accidents where a vehicle crossed the central reservation	694	842	800	869	838
Accidents where a vehicle hit the central crash barrier and crossed the central reservation	94	87	90	115	118

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will review the specification for crash barriers on motorways and dual carriageways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The specification for safety fences is kept under continual review and changes are introduced whenever justified. A recent example is the introduction, subject to approval under European law, of a design of wire rope safety fence that I announced on 22 December 1988, *Official Report*, cols. *415-16*.

A range of higher containment fences and barriers has been developed. By definition, they are considerably less forgiving than existing safety fences. The Department is therefore undertaking a careful assessment of the costs and benefits of their possible deployment. Some further impact testing is required before this assessment can be fully completed. Research currently being carried out in some other European countries will be relevant. It will be some time before a decision can be made.

Drink-Driving (Durham)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide details of the number of road transport drink-related accidents in Durham, giving the most recent figures and annual figures for the last five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table below shows the total number of accidents in Durham in each of the years 1983 to 1987, and the number of accidents in which at least one driver or rider failed a breath test. This is the most common measure of drink-related accidents. These figures will be affected by the proportion of drivers who are tested after an injury crash. It is not possible to produce precise statistics of drink-related accidents because some drivers will have been too severely injured to be breath-tested. The blood alcohol level of drivers who die within 12 hours of an accident are provided from coroner's reports. These are not always complete and exclude those drivers who die after this period but within the 30-day rule for a road accident fatality.

Road accidents in Durham in which the driver failed the breath test: 1983-87

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Accidents involving breath test failures	103	136	143	113	127
All road accidents	1,709	1,771	1,789	1,835	1,789

Road Works (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why road works are currently taking place on the A1, the M1 and the M62 in South Yorkshire; and how long he expects this situation to continue.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The road works currently being carried out on these roads are essential major maintenance

operations. They form part of our phased programme of works, much of which has to be undertaken in the summer months.

The works consist of a series of schemes covering both carriageway strengthening and bridge maintenance works. We expect completion of these on the A1(M) and M62 by November and on the M1 by next February.

Motorway Signs

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department carries out any inspection on the maintenance of motorway signs.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Detailed inspection and maintenance of motorway signs is carried out by the Department's agents in accordance with the frequencies set out in the Department's code of practice for routine maintenance, a copy of which is in the Library. In addition, agents' staff who travel the motorways in the couse of their duties look out for damage or other defects which require prompt attention.

Plutonium (Jumbo Jets)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has made an assessment of the implication of a cargo jumbo jet carrying plutonium packages *(a)* crashing on take-off or landing, or *(b)* blowing-up in mid-air, in terms of environmental contamination.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The transport of plutonium by air has been studied by the Advisory Committee on the Safe Transport of Radioactive Materials (ACTRAM). Its conclusions are published in a report entitled "The Transport of Civil Plutonium by Air". A copy has been placed in the Library.

The report concluded that the risks of a breach of the packaging during a severe accident were negligible.

A copy of the report has been passed to the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is currently studying the transport of radioactive materials by air.

Hazardous Wastes

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the increased import of hazardous, toxic and radioactive wastes that will be transported by road and rail in the United Kingdom following the border deregulation in 1992.

Mr. Portillo: We have no reason to suppose that there will be an increase in the volume of such materials with the abolition of border controls.

Private Cars

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to discourage the increased use of private cars in the period up to the year 2000.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) (column *406*) on 10 July.

I also refer the hon. Lady to "Transport in London" issued in January.

Road Improvements

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the present programme for proposed road improvements to the A27 and A259 roads subject to the necessary funds being available and statutory procedures being approved.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: "Policy for Roads in England: 1987" (Cm. 125) lists the following national trunk road programme schemes for the A27/A259/A261 route:

(a) Planned start of construction April 1989 to March 1991
- A27 Westhampnett bypass
- A27 Polegate bypass
- A259 Winchelsea bypass

(b) Planned start of construction from April 1991 onwards
- A27 Arundel bypass
- A27 Patching junction improvement
- A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western bypass
- A259 Hastings Eastern bypass
- A259 Rye improvement
- A259 New Romney bypass
- A259 St. Mary's Bay and Dymchurch bypass
- A261 M20-A259 Hythe improvement

In addition work is under way on the A27 Pevensey bypass and will start shortly on the first contract for the A27 Brighton bypass. Two further contracts for the Brighton bypass are expected to be let next year; timing of the fourth contract is subject to outstanding statutory procedures.

The recent White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" (Cm. 693) proposes the following further national trunk road programme schemes, for which timing has still to be determined:

- A27 Worthing to Lancing improvement
- A27 Lewes to Polegate improvement
- A259 Pevensey to Bexhill improvement
- A259 Corridor improvements—
  - Guestling Thorn diversion
  - Icklesham diversion
  - Walland Marsh improvement
  - Brookland diversion

There is also a number of small schemes, particularly junction improvements and accident prevention measures, at various stages of preparation within the Department's south-east regional programme.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what comments he has received from the Royal Fine Arts Commission about the redesign of the east London river crossing bridge.

Mr. Channon: The views of the RFAC will be included in the report on the review of the bridge design. A copy will be placed in the Library of the House when a decision on the bridge is announced.

HEALTH

Waiting Lists

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the change in the proportion of in patient waiting list cases waiting for more than one year for treatment in the Warrington district health authority between March 1986 and the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor: The percentage of cases on Warrington district health authority's inpatient waiting list waiting a year or more dropped from 42 per cent. to 20 per cent., between 31 March 1986 and 30 September 1988.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to reduce hospital waiting lists in Durham district health authority area.

Mr. Mellor: As part of our drive to reduce long waiting lists and times, £166,431 has been allocated from the waiting list fund to Durham district health authority. By March 1990 this will have enabled an additional 371 in-patients and day cases and an extra 1,135 outpatients to be treated.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give details of the progress of the waiting list initiative in Warrington health authority and in Halton health authority.

Mr. Mellor: As part of our drive to reduce long waiting lists and times, £468,000 has been allocated from the waiting list fund to Warrington district health authority and £491,000 to Halton district health authority. By March 1990 this will have enabled an additional 3,157 inpatients and day cases and an extra 375 outpatients to be treated in Warrington and 4,682 additional inpatients and day cases in Halton. At September 1988 no one waited longer than one year in Halton. In Warrington the number waiting over a year stood at one third of the 1979 figure.

Elderly People

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the health programmes for elderly people which currently have the support of his Department.

Mr. Freeman: The Department, in partnership with leading voluntary groups, organises and funds the "Keep Warm Keep Well" campaign, offering advice on how to keep warm in winter. Among the voluntary groups awarded grant aid under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968, those offering health promotion activities or advice include EXTEND (on exercise and fitness), the National Osteoporosis Society, Age Exchange Theatre Company (programmes of mental stimulation) and the Newcastle Council for the Disabled and the Disabled Living Services in Manchester (both for projects on incontinence). We have also welcomed the work of the "Age Well" campaign, organised jointly by Age Concern England and the Health Education Authority, and that of the Centre for Health and Retirement Education, organised through the Health Education Authority and the university of London. The "Age Well" campaign has been allocated a grant this year as part of the disbursement of the moneys arising from the effect of the retail prices index calculation error on social security benefits.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance he has given to the Health Education Authority regarding the future development of the health in old age programme.

Mr. Freeman: The Health Education Authority is currently preparing its strategic plan for the next five years. The planning guidelines issued to the Health Education Authority ask it to take account of the elderly in its forward planning process. The strategic plan is due to be submitted to the Department of Health by October.

Blood Transfusion Service

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many donations of blood were collected by the Blood Transfusion Service in each of the past 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: The information available relates to the number of donors bled by the National Blood Transfusion Service and is given in the table.

Calendar Year	*England and Wales*
1978	2,123,607
1979	2,144,484
1980	2,220,036
1981	2,255,731
1982	2,058,994
1983	2,135,840
1984	2,158,626
1985	2,119,060
1986	2,128,450
1987	2,094,316
1988	[1]2,140,810

[1] Provisional.

Note: For the years 1978 to 1981 the figures include a small number of people who reported to the NBTS but from whom it was inappropriate to take blood on that occasion.

Pertussis Vaccine

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ban the use of the pertussis vaccine on children suffering from a serious neurological illness or convulsions.

Mr. Freeman: The memorandum "Immunisation Against Infectious Disease" (Published by HMSO) which was prepared by the joint committee on vaccination and immunisation for the Health Department, and was issued last year to all doctors and health visitors, contains clear advice on contra-indications to the pertussis vaccine. They include children with a documented history of cerebral damage in the neonatal period, and children with a personal history of convulsions.

Traumatic Brain Injury

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the number of patients recovering from traumatic brain injury who require inpatient rehabilitation; and how many places for such treatment are currently provided within the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: No national estimate is available of the number of patients recovering from traumatic brain injury who require inpatient rehabilitation. Information about the incidence of traumatic brain injury is contained in the reports of the Royal College of Physicians on "Physical Disability in 1986 and Beyond" and the Medical Disability Society on "The Management of Traumatic Brain Injury", and we have drawn these reports to the attention of health authorities. It is for individual regional and district health authorities to assess how many of the traumatically brain-injured patients in their area require inpatient rehabilitation.

Information on the number of NHS places for the inpatient rehabilitation of traumatically brain-injured patients is not available centrally.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to encourage regional health authorities to provide inpatient rehabilitation facilities for patients recovering from the effects of traumatic brain injury.

Mr. Mellor: In November last year, we issued guidance to health authorities on the development of services for people with physical or sensory disabilities (Health Notice (88)26, a copy of which is in the Library). This included advice to give particular attention to the rehabilitation of patients with brain injury when planning services for physically and sensorily disabled people.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the names of hospitals referred to him by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution whose facilities fell short of acceptable standards under the Medicines (Administration of Radioactive Substances) Regulations and under sections 6 and 7 (Disposal and Accumulation of Waste) of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on 11 July, concerning inspections carried out under the Medicines (Administrations of Radioactive Substances) Regulations.

Reports of inspections carried out by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) under sections 6 and 7 of the Radioactive Substances Act are not referred to this Department for action, as it is for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to enforce those regulations.

Exhaust Fumes

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the overall cost to the Health Service and economy of lung and other diseases attributed to motor vehicle exhaust fumes.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not available.

Medical Defence Subscriptions

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice he has given to managers of regional health authorities regarding the contractual obligation of hospital medical and dental staff to subscribe to a defence organisation, following the consultation paper "Medical Defence Subscriptions", published on 20 March.

Mr. Mellor: Officials wrote on 29 June confirming that the contractual obligation of hospital medical and dental staff to subscribe to a medical defence organisation remains in force, unless and until alternative arrangements are introduced, following the Health Department's consultation paper.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans exist to ensure the safe disposal of both chlorofluorocarbon refrigerant material and chlorofluorocarbon II in the foam in refrigeration and air-cooling equipment under the control of his Department.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment gave today.

Healthy Diets

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will commission research into the amount of food required to provide a healthy diet for adults and provide an assessment of the cost of such food.

Mr. Freeman: No. The wide variety of foods available in Britain today means that there is an almost infinite number of ways of constructing healthy, and also less healthy, diets. The cost of the diet will depend more on the particular selection of foods than the healthiness of the diet.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many positive HIV antibody test results there were until *(a)* 31 March 1988 and *(b)* 31 March 1989 in each regional health authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 12 July 1989]:* The table shows the positive HIV antibody test resuls reported to CDSC for the time period requested, for England and Wales.

England	*By 31 March 1988*	*By 31 March 1989*
Northern	245	286
Yorkshire	266	310
Trent	210	248
East Anglia	134	160
North West Thames	2,234	2,820
North East Thames	1,432	1,860
South East Thames	780	916
South West Thames	214	266
Wessex	204	234
Oxford	265	332
South Western	192	236
West Midlands	311	351
Mersey	133	154
North Western	279	348
Channel Isles	11	20
Wales	91	123

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest number of positive HIV antibody test results, and the cumulative total of people diagnosed with AIDS, in each regional health authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 12 July 1989]:* The latest numbers of positive antibody test results, and the cumulative total of people diagnosed with AIDS, reported to and accepted by CDSC, are given in the table. Some very recently diagnosed cases of AIDS may not yet have been accepted by CDSC so they may not yet appear in the table.

England	*HIV antibody test results (end June 1989)*	*AIDS cases cumulative total (end June 1989*
Northern	297	53
Yorkshire	314	62
Trent	267	46
East Anglia	161	28
North West Thames	2,968	949
North East Thames	1,965	433
South East Thames	944	253

England	HIV antibody test results (end June 1989)	AIDS cases cumulative total (end June 1989
South West Thames	283	78
Wessex	242	52
Oxford	340	48
South Western	248	47
West Midlands	358	50
Mersey	154	34
North Western	373	86
Channel Isles	20	2
Wales	131	37
Total	9,065	2,238

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Library Spending

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much *(a)* universities and *(b)* polytechnics have spent on (i) books and (ii) journals and periodicals in each year since 1978-79 in cash terms and real terms, indexed so that 1978-79 = 100.

Mr. Jackson: The available information is set out in the table. There may, in addition, be relevant spending within departments.

	Universities (United Kingdom) (academic years)				Polytechnics (England) (financial years)	
	Books		Journals etc.		Books and Journals etc.	
	Cash £ million	Index	Cash £ million	Index	Cash £ million	Index
1978-79	9·20	100·0	7·98	100·0	6·94	100·0
1979-80	9·52	88·2	9·06	96·6	6·97	85·5
1980-81	10·58	85·5	10·10	94·0	6·82	73·0
1981-82	10·62	79·1	10·91	93·6	9·10	89·8
1982-83	11·73	82·3	12·50	101·1	9·71	90·2
1983-84	12·73	85·6	14·40	111·1	9·21	81·8
1984-85	13·44	85·6	16·24	119·2	9·92	83·8
1985-86	14·15	86·2	17·58	123·4	10·05	81·2
1986-87	13·69	80·1	19·26	129·9	10·56	81·9
1987-88	14·38	79·4	19·76	125·7	[1]12·40	90·8

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on library spending in the United Kingdom; and what plans he has to improve the provision of books and periodicals for students.

Mr. Jackson: Responsibility for libraries in universities, pollytechnics and colleges lies with individual institutions. It falls to them to decide their funding priorities within the total resources at their disposal.

City Technology Colleges

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish details of any standard funding agreement drawn up by his Department for the establishment of city technology colleges under section 105 of the Education Reform Act 1988.

Mr. Butcher: The funding agreements will cover both capital and recurrent expenditure for CTCs, arrangements for the payment of grant and conditions attaching to it. they are designed to place CTCs on an equal footing with LEA maintained schools in similar areas.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy on the provision of any form of indemnity to sponsors of city technology colleges against the possibility of future repayment of grant monies paid under section 105 of the Education Reform Act 1988; and if any such indeminity is currently being considered.

Mr. Butcher: Section 105(6) of the Education Reform Act provides for the Secretary of State to indemnify a person who has entered into an agreement with him to establish a city technology college, in the event of that agreement being terminated by the Secretary of State. My right hon. Friend is not currently considering any such indemnity.

Education (No. 2) Act 1986

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the wording of section 43 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: None.

Special Needs

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about his policy toward adult literacy and special needs courses.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has consistently made clear the high priority which the Government attach to meeting the literacy and numeracy needs of adults. The Department's grant to the adult literacy and basic skills unit (ALBSU) for the current year is £2,724,000. This represents an increase of almost 10 per cent. over the level of grant in the previous year. The BBC will be launching a series of programmes on adult literacy and numeracy in the autumn. The Department and the Training Agency are co-operation with ALBSU to support this initiative.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what funds he has made available in each of the last five years for the education of mentally handicapped children.

Mr. Butcher: The majority of Government revenue support for education provided by local authorities is

channelled through block grant, which is not hypothecated to services or to particular activities within services. Specific grants are, however, paid in aid of particular educational expenditure under the education support grant programme, and the local education authority training grants scheme (which replaced the in-service teacher training grants). Since 1 April 1985 an estimated total of £45 million of expenditure related to education for children and students with special educational needs, including those with mental handicaps, has been assisted through various activities under these specific grant programmes.

Health and Safety

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to review his policy toward health and safety requirements in schools.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend will continue his policy of attaching great priority toward health and safety requirements in schools and the Department will continue to provide advice and guidance on good practice.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pesticide Residues

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what checks are made for pesticide residues in products intended for sale to consumers; and what research is being carried out to ascertain the effect of such residues on people.

Mr. Ryder: Monitoring is carried out by the Government's working party on pesticide residues and the results are published. This monitoring involves the analysis of some 2,000 to 3,000 samples of home produced and imported food and agricultural produce per year, with individual samples being examined for a wide range of pesticide residues at a cost of over £1 million.

Before a pesticide is approved for use its likely effect on consumers is assessed if its use is shown to leave residues in food. Approval would not be given if this assessment suggested any risk to the health of consumers.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how he expects the following measures will affect the emissions of greenhouse gases: *(a)* the environmentally sensitive area scheme, and *(b)* the set-aside scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Both the environmentally sensitive areas and the set-aside schemes should reduce fertiliser usage and thereby help limit nitrous oxide emissions. The planting of woodlands on set-aside land would fix carbon dioxide for longer periods than conventional agriculture.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will give the area in hectares in each environmentally sensitive area of agricultural land excluding farm woodland;

(2) if he will list the estimated length of hedgerow in the environmentally sensitive area of *(a)* Shropshire borders, and *(b)* Suffolk river valleys.

Mr. Ryder: The information requested is not yet available.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of cows in each environmentally sensitive area *(a)* prior to designation, and *(b)* the latest figures available since designation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish the work he has contracted on the economic and social effects of environmentally sensitive areas when it is completed.

Mr. Ryder: I will publish information on the economic and social effects of environmentally sensitive areas together with information on their environmental impact when all the contracted work has been completed.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the areas for possible designation as environmentally sensitive on the initial list submitted to him by the Nature Conservancy Council and Countryside Commission.

Mr. Ryder: The areas initially identified in Great Britain by the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission are as follows:

Environmentally sensitive areas

1. Shetland
2. Orkney
3. Central Deeside
4. Caithness and North West Sutherland Coast
5. Uists and Benbecula
6. Inner Hebrides Coastal crofting and farming
7. Nithsdale
8. Breadalbane
9. Strathallan
10. Whitlaw/Eildon
11. Northumberland National Park, Moorland
12. South Solway
13. North Pennines
14. Lake District
15. Arnside and Silverdale
16. Yorkshire Dales
17. North York Moors
18. Lower Derwent Valley
19. Peak District
20. Shropshire Hills
21. Clun Valley
22. Wyre Forest
23. Nene Washes and Valley
24. Ouse Washes and Valley
25. Breckland
26. The Broads
27. Suffolk Coast and Heaths
28. Dedham Vale
29. North Kent Marshes
30. North Downs
31. Ashdown Forest
32. Pevensey Levels
33. South Downs
34. Surrey Heaths
35. Itchen Valley
36. Test Valley
37. New Forest grazings
38. North Wessex Downs
39. South Wiltshire Downs
40. Mendips
41. Somerset Levels and Moors
42. Exmoor
43. Dartmoor
44. Bodmin Moor

45. West Penwith Moors
46. Anglesey
47. Lleyn
48. Southern Snowdonia
49. East Montgomeryshire and East Radnorshire
50. Mynydd Elenydd
51. Radnor Forest and South Radnorshire Uplands
52. Black Mountain
53. Black Mountains, West Brecon Beacons
54. Gower
55. Teifi
56. Pembrokeshire

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of occasions that the farmers liaison group for each environmentally sensitive area has met since 1 July.

Mr. Ryder: There are no farmers liaison groups in any environmentally sensitive area.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the statutory and voluntary organisations represented on the formal liaison groups for each of the environmentally sensitive areas in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ryder: There are no formal liaison arrangements in any environmentally sensitive area, although informal arrangements exist which vary to meet local needs and circumstances. In all cases regular contact is maintained with a wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations who have an interest in the scheme.

Less Favoured Areas

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions in each of the last five years hill livestock compensatory allowances have been refused to farmers in the less favoured areas on the grounds that the ewe density on the farms concerned exceeded the European Community stocking limits.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The EC structures regulation (79/785), which provides the basic framework for paying HLCAs, does not currently impose European Community stocking limits as such, although allowances may not exceed 101 ECUs per livestock unit and per hectare. Because the rates set in the United Kingdom have been below the 101 ECUs limit, it has not in itself affected ewe stocking densities.

However, under national legislation, limits are imposed on the number of ewes per hectare on which HLCAs are paid (six in the severely disadvantaged areas and nine in the disadvantaged areas).

Quangos (Appointments)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer on 10 July, how much it would cost to provide the information on appointments to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Assuming around 90 entries, my best estimate is about £500.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans exist to ensure the safe disposal of both chlorofluorocarbon refrigerent material and chlorofluorocarbon 11 in the foam in refrigeration and air-cooling equipment under the control of his Department.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment today.

Food Stockpiles

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what is the total amount of wheat, beef and olive oil which is stockpiled: (i) in the United Kingdom and (ii) in the European Economic Community as a whole, in: *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1984 and *(c)* 1979; and what was the total cost of storage and maintaining these for 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[pursuant to his reply, 6 July 1989, c. 242-44.]:* An error has occurred in my previous reply. The correct figures of the cost of storing and maintaining these stocks during 1988 was:

£ million[3]

	European Community	*United Kingdom*
Cereals[4]	153	14
Beef	119	8
Olive oil	26	0
TOTAL	298	22

Footnotes:

[4] Separate breakdown for wheat not available.

[3] Expenditure charged to the 1988 budget relates to expenditure during the period November 1987 to 15 October 1988.

Research

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the research projects currently carried out at his experimental centres at Brogdale, Lizcombe, Luddington and Rosewarne.

Mr. Ryder: The following Government-funded R and D projects are currently being carried out, in whole or in part, at the experimental centres indicated.

Publicly funded projects (whole or part) at Luddington EHS 1989-90

CP27	Investigations to assist in the interpretation of data from surveys of pesticide residues in agriculture and horticulture produce
FNO2	Container grown nursery stock production
FNO3	Field grown nursery stock selection and propagation
FNO4	Field grown nursery stock production
GTO1	Apples and pears variety trialling
GTO2	Apples and pears—production
GT03	Plums and cherries variety trialling
GT04	Plums and cherries production
GT05	Cider apples and other fruit for juicing
GT10	Strawberries variety trialling
GT11	Strawberries production
GT12	Cane bush and other fruits variety trialling

GT13	Cane bush and other fruits production
GT21	Fruit, soil management and crop nutrition
GT22	Top fruit pest and disease control
GT23	Soft fruit control of pests and diseases
PC02	Lettuce production and varieties
PC04	Tomato production
VG01	Brassicas, variety evaluation
VG02	Brassica crop production
VG05	Salads, variety evaluation
VG10	Alliums, variety evaluation
VG11	Alliums production
VG20	Other vegetables variety evaluation
VG21	Other vegetables—crop production
VG25	Field vegetable, soil management and nutrition
VG26	Field vegetable pest control
VG29	To develop improved post harvest handling and storage techniques for minimising wastage and extending market life

Commercial contract and levy-funded R and D is not included.

Publicly funded projects (whole or part) at Rosewarne EHS 1989-90

FN10	Narcissus variety trialling propagation stock selection and evaluation
FN11	Narcissus production
FN12	Other bulbs and bulb flowers varieties and propagation
FN21	Bulb diseases
AR01	Early potatoes-variety testing
AR03	Early potatoes-production agronomy
VG01	Brassicas, variety evaluation
VG02	Brassica crop production
VG13	Roots production
VG25	Field vegetables, soil management and nutrition
VG27	Diseases of field vegetables and their control

Publicly funded projects (whole or part) at Brogdale EHS 1989-90

GT01	Apples and pears variety trialling
GT02	Apples and pears—production
GT03	Plums and cherries variety trialling
GT04	Plums and cherries production
GT10	Strawberries variety trialling
GT11	Strawberries production
GT12	Cane bush & other fruits variety trialling
GT13	Cane bush and other fruits production
GT21	Fruit, soil management and crop nutrition
GT22	Top fruit pest and disease control
EC22	Propagation weaning and growing on farm woodland nursery transplants
FN01	Container grown nursery stock selection and propagation

Publicly funded projects (whole or part) at Liscombe EHF 1989-90

BC02	Reproduction and rearing of beef cattle
BC03	Finishing systems
EC20	The establishment and management of small farm woodlands
BN02	Evaluation of the resistance to deterioration of alternative floor surface treatments in bunker
GR02	Sward establishment and management for grazing and conservation
GR10	Grass and forage conservation
SH01	Genetics—sheep breeding
SH02	Reproduction rearing and the nutrition of the ewe an suckling lamb
SH03	Nutrition and management of the weaned lamb
SH04	Multicomponent studies housing and handling

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many staff are currently employed at the Institute of Horticultural Research at Littlehampton; how many staff will be made redundant when the institute closes in three years' time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

The complement of full-time staff employed at IHR Littlehampton is 177. There are 33 part-time staff. The number likely to be make redundant when the Littlehampton site closes cannot be forecast but will be kept to a minimum by redeployment of staff between sites in the institutes and elsewhere in the AFRC and by natural wastage in the period until the closure. The timetable for restructuring is still uncertain. A start will depend on extra funding for a building programme and transfer costs and three years will be needed to complete the process.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the projects currently undertaken at the Institute of Horticultural Research at Littlehampton; if he will indicate which projects are due to be relocated when the site is closed in three years' time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

The programmes currently undertaken at the AFRC Institute of Horticultural Research, Littlehampton are:

- Energy saving in glasshouses.
- Production systems for protected crops.
- Control of pests and diseases of protected crops.
- Evaluation of biological and other novel methods for pest control.
- Mushrooms.
- Production of ornamental bulbs and corms.
- Control of diseases and pests of ornamental bulbs and corms.
- Development of integrated control techniques for pests of outdoor crops.
- Molecular and cell biology of strategic plant processes.

Other programmes undertaken jointly at Littlehampton and at the East Malling and Wellesbourne sites of IHR, are:

Breeding and selection of hardy ornamental nursery stock.
Propagation and production of hardy ornamentals.
Crop protection of hardy ornamentals.
Optimum harvesting, storage and marketing conditions for top fruit and soft fruit.
Horticultural crop improvement by non-conventional methods.
Physiology and biochemistry of crop development.
Root development and function.
Investigation of host/pathogen relationships.
Development of novel methods of pest and disease control.

There are also several industrially-supported projects which supplement AFRC funded programmes.

Under the AFRC's restructuring plan, implementation of which will depend on the extra funding for a building programme and transfer costs, most Littlehampton programmes will be transferred to the principal IHR research station at Wellesbourne.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the projects that are currently undertaken at the North Wyke research station; if he will indicate which projects have been identified as near market and which of these have definite funding from outside bodies and industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is as follows:

Current (1989-90) Programme Funded by MAFF Commissions and if Near Market

Comparison of the yield potential of permanent grass swards, and re-seeds of contrasting ages. Yes.

Productivity and clover compatibility of late-maturing tetraploid perennial ryegrass under cutting and grazing. Yes.

Yield potential of low-input grazing legumes.

Production and utilisation of grass grown with broad-leaved trees.

Nitrogen cycling in grazed grassland as influenced by sward composition, fertiliser input and drainage.

Effects of soil conditions on nutrient availability.

Fertiliser strategies to reduce leaching losses from grazed grass.

Establish responses to grazing management with cows grazing permanent grass swards. Yes.

To improve by supplementation the utilisation of grazed pastures and nutrients derived from them. Yes.

To develop optimum strategies for low-input beef production on long-term grassland including grass/clover swards.

The utilisation of grass-white clover swards for milk production.

Physiology of plant/animal interactions in grazing systems.

Develop lamb production systems based on long-term grass-white clover swards. Yes.

None of the near-market identified work has yet been picked up by alternative sponsors.

Current (1989-90) Contract programmes showing sponsor

Fertiliser effects on productivity and botanical composition on permanent in Somerset Moors. NCC, MAFF, DOE.

Forms of phosphate fertiliser for grass-clover swards. Timac.

Pests and disease control in grassland. Various.

Effects of fertilisers and other inputs on grass and grass-clover productivity. ICI, Farrant.

SCOTLAND

Employment Training

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the number of employment training placements in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Of the 23,200 people participating in employment training in Scotland at 30 June 1989, around 19,300 were on placements with employers or on projects.

Domestic Rates

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will produce a table for each district council showing the total yield from the domestic rate payment, excluding domestic water rates, for 1988-89, showing the breakdown of the amounts attributed to district and regions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The estimated figures are given in the table.

£000

Local Authorities	*Yield of Districts Domestic Rates 1988-89*	*Yield of Regional Domestic Rates 1988-89*	*Total Yield of Domestic Rates 1988-89*
Orkney	1,258		1,258
Shetland	3,310		3,310
Western Isles	2,576		2,576
Berwickshire	480	2,323	2,802
Ettrick and Lauderdale	919	3,879	4,799
Roxburgh	1,073	4,115	5,189
Tweeddale	386	1,929	2,314
Clackmannan	2,098	5,687	7,785
Falkirk	5,265	17,493	22,758
Stirling	5,317	11,906	17,224
Annandale and Eskdale	1,067	4,359	5,425
Nithsdale	1,697	6,936	8,633
Stewartry	692	3,250	3,942
Wigtown	714	3,569	4,282
Dunfermline	4,114	17,746	21,860
Kirkcaldy	5,955	20,470	26,425
North East Fife	2,941	11,273	14,215
Aberdeen City	8,622	26,606	35,228
Banff and Buchan	2,356	8,141	10,497
Gordon	1,869	8,075	9,944
Kincardine and Deeside	1,111	5,854	6,966
Moray	2,003	8,240	10,243
Badenoch and Strathspey	240	1,562	1,802
Caithness	627	2,608	3,235

Local Authorities	Yield of Districts Domestic Rates 1988-89	Yield of Regional Domestic Rates 1988-89	Total Yield of Domestic Rates 1988-89
Inverness	1,487	8,139	9,626
Lochaber	607	2,178	2,785
Nairn	217	1,412	1,629
Ross and Cromarty	1,310	5,450	6,760
Skye and Lochalsh	246	1,065	1,311
Sutherland	238	1,301	1,539
East Lothian	4,324	14,599	18,923
Edinburgh City	24,718	84,960	109,678
Midlothian	3,566	12,041	15,608
West Lothian	5,340	20,434	25,774
Argyll and Bute	3,255	9,764	13,019
Bearsden and Milngavie	2,265	9,931	12,195
Clydebank	2,183	6,381	8,564
Clydesdale	2,404	8,181	10,585
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	2,567	8,867	11,433
Cumnock and Doon Valley	1,569	5,262	6,831
Cunninghame	7,197	20,012	27,209
Dumbarton	4,286	12,857	17,143
East Kilbride	3,294	13,129	16,423
Eastwood	2,378	13,554	15,932
Glasgow City	46,654	100,350	147,003
Hamilton	5,001	15,837	20,838
Inverclyde	4,017	14,309	18,326
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	3,653	11,255	14,907
Kyle and Carrick	5,751	19,282	25,032
Monklands	4,528	14,337	18,865
Motherwell	5,785	20,292	26,077
Renfrew	9,924	31,425	41,349
Strathkelvin	3,840	13,679	17,519
Angus	3,220	12,402	15,622
Dundee City	10,317	24,952	35,269
Perth and Kinross	4,775	17,735	22,510
SCOTLAND	237,603	731,393	968,996

Notes:
1. Domestic rates are net of domestic rates relief.
2. The columns may not add due to roundings.

Community Charge

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will produce a table for each district council showing the total estimated yield from the community charge and standard community charge, excluding water charges, for 1989-90, showing the breakdown of the amount attributed to district and region.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 14 June, *Official Report*, Vol. 154, columns *495-98*.

Tourist Board

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consequences are envisaged for the Scottish tourist board as the result of the announcements contained in the reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) by the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr. Fowler) on 6 July, *Official Report*, column *278*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: No changes are envisaged. I am satisfied that the means by which Government support is delivered to the Scottish tourist industry remain relevant and effective.

Hospital Cars

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of patients living in the Highlands and Islands conveyed to hospital by the Scottish ambulance service in hospital cars in *(a)* the eight months prior to August 1988 and *(b)* the eight months following August 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available on the number of patients conveyed by the hospital car service in the Highlands and Western Isles in 1988 is:

Number of patients conveyed

Period	Number
22 December 1987—21 March 1988	3,884
22 March 1988—21 June 1988	4,333
22 June 1988—21 September 1988	3,636
22 September 1988—21 December 1988	2,865
Total	14,718

Figures for 1989 are not yet available.

Food Safety

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide additional resources to ensure that district councils are able to provide an adequate number of environmental health officers to tackle the health hazards arising from food; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* Local authorities have recieved a generous revenue support grant settlement for 1989-90. They should therefore have adequate scope within available resources to fulfill their responsibilities for environmental health.

Any future requirement for additional resources can be taken into account in subsequent revenue support grant settlements.

Food Safety

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide additional resources to ensure that regional councils are able to provide an adequate number of environmental health officers to tackle the health hazards arising from food; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* The provision of environmental health officers is the responsibility of district and islands councils.

Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish *(a)* the number and *(b)* the cost of local authorities' environmental health and trading standards officers for each financial year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* This information is not held centrally.

Council House Sales

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number and total value of council houses sold by each district council in the year 1988-89.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 13 July 1989]:* The information requested which is available to date is set out in the table:

Local authority sales to sitting tenants 1988-89[1]

District	*Number of sales*	*Value of receipts £000*
SCOTLAND	24,144	243,281
Berwickshire	120	1,254
Ettrick and Lauderdale	159	1,676
Roxburgh	219	2,261
Tweeddale[2]	27	307
Clackmannan	356	3,568
Falkirk	1,252	12,416
Stirling	457	4,729
Annandale and Eskdale	177	1,933
Nithsdale	417	3,951
Stewartry	86	861
Wigtown	132	1,273
Dunfermline	819	7,631
Kirkcaldy	778	6,761
North East Fife	316	3,372
Aberdeen	643	8,290
Banff and Buchan	322	3,641
Gordon	78	1,075
Kincardine and Deeside	61	851
Moray	372	4,331
Badenoch and Strathspey	53	627
Caithness	93	935
Inverness	169	1,997
Lochaber	116	1,391
Nairn	21	247
Ross and Cromarty[2]	82	984
Skye and Lochalsh	27	338
Sutherland[2]	30	319
East Lothian	647	7,868
Edinburgh	2,411	22,396
Midlothian	570	7,144
West Lothian	629	6,297
Argyll and Bute	139	1,524
Bearsden and Milngavie	51	616
Clydebank	468	4,071
Clydesdale	363	3,777
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	187	1,835
Cumnock and Doon Valley	n/a	n/a
Cunninghame	789	7,686
Dumbarton	383	3,558
East Kilbride	85	923
Eastwood	78	866
Glasgow	3,189	28,742
Hamilton	758	7,856
Inverclyde	263	2,455
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	568	5,421
Kyle and Carrick	775	7,962
Monklands	n/a	n/a
Motherwell	844	9,082
Renfrew	1,295	13,248
Strathkelvin	477	5,356
Angus	386	4,123
Dundee	812	6,786
Perth and Kinross	469	5,198
Orkney Islands	53	592
Shetland Islands	44	595
Western Isles	29	283

[1] Only sales for which complete information is available are included.
[2] Returns for question 1 1989 not included.
n/a No returns available.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensioners

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many individuals are in receipt of both the basic state pension and housing benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As at 31 May 1989, the number of claimants in receipt of housing benefit, with either the claimant or the claimant's partner, or both being in receipt of basic state pension, was 2·8 million.
Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry 1988.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many individuals are in receipt of both the basic state pension and income support.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Latest estimates indicate that the number of claimants in receipt of income support, with either the claimant or the claimant's partner, or both, being in receipt of basic state pension, is 1·61 million.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many individuals are in receipt of both the basic state pension and family credit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As at 31 May 1989 approximately 2,000 women aged 60 and over were in receipt of family credit. Information relating to individuals in receipt of both family credit and the basic state pension is not available.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give for each of the last three years *(a)* the number of people receiving attendance allowance, *(b)*

the number awarded the allowance in that year and *(c)* the number who lost the allowance because of death or recovery.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 13 June at columns *387-88*.

Single Parent Families

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list in the *Official Report* the various measures taken since 1986 to assist single parent families.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The needs of lone parents were recognised in the social security reforms introduced last year. As well as the family premium, income support and housing benefit have a lone parent premium. In family credit the adult rate for married couples also applies to lone parents. From April families with children who receive income-related benefit had increases over and above those needed to restore their real value of 50p a child.

Unmarried mothers seeking maintenance will also benefit from changes made by the Family Law Reform Act.

Disability

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he plans to act on the evidence of the recently published surveys of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to improve the lot of disabled people by uprating, extending and improving access to disability benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) on 3 July at column *2*.

Community Charge

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to lay the regulations on community charge rebates before the House.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We intend to lay the Community Charge Benefits (General) Regulations 1989 once the Social Security Bill has received Royal Assent.

Income Support

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will commission research into the amount of money spent by recipients of income support on food.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the amounts spent on food by different groups—including recipients of income support—is already collected as part of the family expenditure survey.

Family Credit

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been *(a)* the total number of claims for family credit and *(b)* the number of claims assessed as eligible for payment.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Up to and including 7 July 1989, 1,028,536 claims for family credit had been received and 610,487 awards had been made. The total number of claims received includes 48,853 which were either subsequently withdrawn, or were invalid because they were made more than four weeks before the expiry of an existing award. At 7 July 1989, 86,440 claims were still being processed.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the expenditure to date on the publicity campaign to re-launch family credit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Up to 30 June expenditure on paid advertising was £3·7 million and £1·1 million on other promotion and marketing costs, mostly printing and postage.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of claims for family credit have been assessed as ineligible for payment in each month since April 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The percentage of valid claims dealt with in each month which were unsuccessful is as follows:

	Percentage
1988	
April }	32·0
May }	
June	27·0
July	27·8
August	27·0
September	26·4
October	24·9
November	24·8
December	26·1
1989	
January	26·9
February	25·6
March	24·4
April	26·2
May	48·8
June	44·8

Valid claims exclude those withdrawn and those made more than four weeks before the expiry of an existing award.

Mental Illness (Services)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in the light of his statement of 12 July on community care, what plans he has to improve health services for the mentally ill.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

I welcome the opportunity to outline Government policy towards the care in the community of the mentally ill and to indicate the initiatives that we propose to take to improve these services in England. These will, of course, be included in the White Paper on community care to be published this autumn which will set out the finer detail where necessary.

Until the 1960s there was little alternative for those suffering from serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia to prolonged in-patient care in one of the large and often remote mental hospitals. Scientific advances in the 1950s, particularly the discovery that the symptoms of schizophrenia could often be relieved by drugs, together with the development of community psychiatric services, opened up the possibility that many sufferers could be

treated on a largely out-patient basis. The vision of a new pattern of services on this basis, reflecting an already occurring fall in the number of hospital beds, and anticipating a further fall, was outlined by the then Minister of Health, Mr. Enoch Powell, in 1961. It was turned into detailed policy under Sir Keith Joseph in the early 1970s, though the White Paper "Better Services for the Mentally Ill"—was actually published in 1975.

The policy as stated in that White Paper, the development of locally-based hospital and community services, including facilities providing long term asylum for those who need it, and as a consequence the closure of very large mental hospitals, has remained essentially unchanged since, supported by successive Governments. It is founded on scientific and therapeutic advances, and the knowledge that, with the right supporting services, many sufferers can live fuller lives in the community than in institutions.

In our view, this long-standing policy is a civilised and humanitarian one which has benefited many patients who, otherwise, would have been destined to spend their lives in large isolated hospitals. It has also inspired many caring people to work in the psychiatric services. We know it can work. We have examples of services such as those in Buckingham and Hackney, which show what can be done through prevention, early intervention and well co-ordinated care at home working closely with family doctors. I am glad today to be able to reaffirm the Government's commitment to the policy, and our determination to ensure that it is properly implemented. There is no going back to the days when health service care for the mentally ill invariably meant long term institutional care.

Although there are some who question the policy itself, most concerns are about implementation: the pervasive sense that all too often community care means no care: that insufficient resources have been put in place to provide effective alternatives to the old hospitals, where bed numbers have fallen substantially. I would make two points about this.

While we accept that there are deficiencies, it would be wrong to minimise the substantial shift of resources from hospital in-patient provision to community-based services provided by health and local authorities. Over the last ten years for which information is available (1977 to 1987), the number of places for people with a mental illness in local authority, voluntary and private residential homes almost doubled (to 9,000) and there was a 50 per cent. increase in day centre places (to 6,000). On the health service side there has been a 44 per cent. growth in day hospital places (to 19,000) over the same period; the number of community psychiatric nurses has more than doubled since 1981, and it is estimated that the number of districts with a community mental health centre has doubled every two years throughout the 1980s.

We made quite explicit in last year's guidance to the National Health Service what has always been the intention: that hospitals should close only when proper alternative locally based services were available. When the Secretary of State discussed this issue yesterday with the chairmen of the regional health authorities he made it clear that he will not approve the closure of any mental hospital unless he is satisfied that proper alternative services are in place. This coupled with the requirement to introduce care programmes in 1991, means that no patient will be discharged from hospital without proper consideration of his or her need for continuing care and where needs are identified, plans to meet them.

Over the last few months we have been working, and will continue to work, collaboratively with individual regional health authorities to identify the progress that has been made and the problems that have been encountered. Our purpose is not to recriminate over any inadequacies in the past, but to identify what we at the centre need to do to help health authorities implement policy effectively. It is through this work, and discussions with the social services inspectorate and voluntary organisations, that we are building up a region-by-region picture of progress and problems, and I expect to have this around the turn of the year.

To enhance our capacity to undertake this work we have secured the services at the Department of one of the few general managers in the country with experience of developing locally based services and closing a major hospital. Mr. John Jenkins, who played a leading role in the development of services in Exeter and Torbay and the closure of Exminster hospital will be working with us in an advisory capacity from next Monday, and will play a key role in our collaborative work with regional health authorities and the development of any further initiatives or guidance that seem necessary.

I would now like to outline a number of specific policy steps. The first is guidance to health authorities on care programmes. Much concern has been expressed about the adequacy of continuing health service care for psychiatric patients discharged from hospital. Last year, through a health circular, a requirement was placed on district health authorities to initiate, by 31 March 1991, explicit individually tailored programmes for continuing health service care for all such patients. Later this month we will be formally consulting on guidance to authorities on developing these care programmes, which will emphasise the need for locally developed approaches including local registers of vulnerable discharged patients and regular reviews of their needs. We expect to publish the definitive guidance in the autumn. In addition, and we greatly welcome this, the Royal College of Psychiatrists has agreed to draw up minimum acceptable professional standards for assessing patients prior to discharge, and for follow up after discharge. A preliminary statement of good practice is expected from the college in late summer, to be followed by a more substantive one developed in concert with the other professions concerned. These two initiatives will, together, provide much clearer guidance on good practice than currently exists.

As part of our 1990-91 research programme, we plan to commission research which will assist us to evaluate the effectiveness of the care programme initiative.

The second is guidance on compulsory admission to hospital. Another area of current concern is in relation to arrangements for compulsory admission to hospital, and the related issue of compulsory treatment in the community.

On hospital admissions, there seems to be wide agreement that the law is adequate, but concern that its interpretation by practitioners is sometimes not. We believe that these problems will be much reduced once the code of practice for admitting and treating patients compulsorily required under the 1983 Mental Health Act is available. In April we set up an expert group under the chairmanship of Mr. James Collier, with Mr. William

Bingley, on secondment from MIND to whom we are indebted, as the full-time executive secretary. Work is well advanced, and the code will be laid before the House this autumn.

We understand that in due course the Royal College of Psychiatrists will be giving us its views on the possible role of new legal powers to ensure compulsory treatment in the community. We will then explore this issue with all the interested parties involved. Without prejudicing the discussion, we would need to be very clear both of the benefits, and that they could not be achieved through voluntary means, before seriously considering asking Parliament to create provision for compulsory treatment in the community.

The third is health service resources. Although the issues that I have already referred to are important, we fully understand that underlying much of the current concern is the question of resources. Finance from mental hospital sites provides valuable capital for replacement facilities, but these facilities are needed before hospitals can be vacated. They in turn have to compete for resources with other priorities within capital programmes, and this may hold up the whole process. Existing arrangements offer one way of addressing this problem—with regions lending each other capital to match the timing of planned new developments. Another possible solution is for authorities to enter into agreements with developers to upgrade, purchase and build community facilities for the mentally ill, in return for which they would receive all or part of the vacated site. We plan to invite health authorities to identify sites where this approach would be suitable: the aim will be to bring about the degree of private sector involvement that maximises value for money.

We do understand the revenue burden of keeping open old hospitals which will close and new replacement facilities already open. Clearly the quicker older facilities can be closed the lesser the burden of double running and running inefficient emptying facilities.

The fourth is local authority resources. Proper social care for the mentally ill in the community is vital. Yesterday the Government confirmed that local authorities would continue to be responsible for the social care of the mentally ill and announced that from 1991 we would be instituting a new, specific grant to local authorities to encourage them to make the necessary contribution to the services required. To encourage joint planning of services, and proper collaboration in relation to care programmes, we are making this grant payable through health authorities as the Secretary of State's agent, on the basis of agreed plans. Further details will be set out in the White Paper on community care, to be published this autumn.

The fifth is quality of services. We are very concerned that the new hospital and community facilities that are developing should provide a good quality service. In the wake of scandals about the conditions in some mental hospitals in the 1960s and early 1970s, the health advisory service was established, to keep a watch on standards and encourage better services. I think that it is generally agreed that, over the years the HAS has been successful. We are now examining its work to identify how it might be done even more effectively, and in a way even more relevant to the NHS as it will develop following "Working for Patients".

The sixth is the contribution of the voluntary sector. We believe that a lot can be done, through Departmental grants to voluntary organisations, to increase the information, services and mutual help available to the parents and friends of patients. Current grants to voluntary organisations in the mental health field, including mental handicap, are being reviewed with a view to ensuring that we use the nearly £2½ million a year that we allocate in a way which best supports patients and their relatives and encourages new initiatives which are of clear and direct benefit.

There are some areas we need to explore more fully as a matter of urgency. I would like to refer to some of the issues that we are aware are causing concerns that we are beginning to address, and on which work will be undertaken in the course of the next year or so.

First, the need to improve the ability of general practitioners and others to prevent, detect and treat mental illness. The first of a series of departmentally sponsored conferences on these themes was held in May; others are planned for the autumn and next spring. In the light of these discussions we will be considering what practical initiatives need to be taken;

Secondly, the need to provide appropriate services for those among the homeless population who suffer from mental illness. The incidence of mental illness among homeless and destitute men and women in London and other cities has been linked by some to the fall in the number of hospital beds. Research funded by the Department shows that, most commonly, homeless mentally ill people have had care organised outside hospital but have lost touch with the service. We expect to reduce the future numbers losing touch through the measures to which I have already referred. But we need to address the existing problem, and will be doing so in the light of a recent study by the Policy Studies Institute, again funded by the Department, on schemes for delivering primary health care to single homeless people;

Third, the need for adequate arrangements in each health district for emergency care of people suffering from mental illness. In some places this is handled through the normal accident and emergency service; in others by specialist mental health emergency arrangements. We will be discovering the extent of arrangements and seeking to evaluate alternatives.

Finally, let me summarise what we are announcing at this stage.

We reaffirm our commitment to the longstanding policy of locally based hospital and community services, including asylum;

working collaboratively with the regional health authorities, we will ensure that hospitals are not closed before proper alternative provision is made;

from 1991, we will require district health authorities to have care programmes for those discharged from hospital, upon which we will be issuing guidance, and we propose a new specific grant to local authorities, payable through health authorities, to help meet the social care needs of such patients;

we are offering health authorities the possibility of, in effect, bringing forward the sale of hospital sites, to fund new facilities such as hospital hostels;

we propose this autumn to lay before the House a code of practice for the compulsory assessment and treatment of patients suffering from mental disorder in hospital, and will consider, though from a very questioning standpoint, the possibility of new legislation for compulsory treatment in the community;

we are reviewing the work of the health advisory service, to ensure effective oversight of the quality of locally-based services;

we are reviewing our funding of voluntary bodies, to ensure that public funds are used in the most effective way to encourage the development and provision of services for patients and their relatives;

we are looking at ways of increasing general practitioners' awareness of mental illness and how it can be treated; the extent and adequacy of emergency services for people with a mental illness, and what can be done to meet the needs of those members of the homeless population in London and elsewhere suffering from mental illness.

ENVIRONMENT

Council House Sales

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many admitted full ownership claims were in the pipeline at the end of the last quarter for which information is available.

Mr. Trippier: About two thirds of the local authorities in England have submitted returns for the period ending 31 March 1989; the total of pipeline figures for these authorities was some 112,000.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discharges of toxic waste currently take place into the North sea.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Toxic wastes are discharged into the North sea via two main routes: direct discharge by pipe from land-based sources and riverine inputs from direct discharges to rivers. Wastes also enter the North sea from dumping and incineration at sea and general atmospheric deposition. The 1987 quality status report on the North sea confirms that most of the pollution in the North sea comes from rivers.

The combined effect of all United Kingdom rivers flowing into the North sea contributes about 20 per cent. of riverborne pollutants, although the United Kingdom has almost half the North sea coastline. The Rhine and Meuse alone contribute between 40 and 50 per cent. of pollutants carried by rivers.

Community Charge

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to introduce poll tax rebates for those who care for the elderly within the family home.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax.

People caring for the elderly within the family home may, depending upon their incomes, be eligible for rebates of up to 80 per cent. of the community charge, and if they are in receipt of income support, will have an amount reflected in their income support to help with the remaining 20 per cent.

Waste Incinerators

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the event of planning appeals arising out of the refusal of local authorities to grant planning consent for municipal, chemical or hospital waste incinerators, he will make it his policy to take into account local public concern over such proposals and the findings of the interdepartmental working group report "Dioxins in the Environment", and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Section 29 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 requires those who decide planning applications to have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. My right hon. Friend and his planning inspectors are subject to the same requirement in relation to appeals. Accordingly, in deciding planning appeals inspectors can take account of a wide range of evidence, including expressions of local opinion, providing it relates to material land-use planning considerations.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of the recent report from the interdepartmental working group on polychlorinated dibenzo-par-dioxins and polychlorinated dibenzo-furans entitled "Dioxins in the Environment", he will now consider introducing stricter planning and operational controls on municipal, chemical and hospital waste incinerators; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: On planning controls I refer the hon. Member to the reply to his earlier question today.

As for operational controls, new regulations came into effect on 31 March this year bringing all incinerators capable of burning waste at a rate of 1 tonne per hour or more under the control of the national air pollution inspectorates. These inspectorates already controlled all chemical waste incinerators. We have recently agreed within the European Community two directives on prevention of air pollution from new and existing municipal waste incinerators. These directives specify combustion conditions which take particular account of the need to minimise emissions of dioxins and furans. The Department has also recently drawn up, in consultation with the Department of Health, draft guidance on incineration of clinical waste which includes combustion conditions designed to minimise dioxin and furan emissions.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will tabulate what a typical married couple with two children and one wage earner living in the London borough of Waltham Forest would pay *(a)* in community charge and *(b)* in a system of capital value rates plus local income tax paid in proportions of 80:20, respectively, if the wage earner earned *(a)* £60,000, *(b)* £90,000 and *(c)* £120,000 and lived in (i) property owned by that wage earner worth £90,000 and (ii) property owned by that wage earner worth £120,000 and (iii) property owned by that wage earner worth £150,000, making the same assumptions as in his reply to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) on 22 March, *Official Report*, column *626*.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is provided in the table.

Illustrative annual liability in Waltham Forest under a system of capital value rates combined with local income tax, 1988-89

Earnings	Property value £90,000	Property value £120,000	Property value £150,000
(a) £60,000	£1,635	£1,915	£2,200
(b) £90,000	£2,060	£2,345	£2,625
(c) £120,000	£2,490	£2,770	£3,050

The figures are based on illustrative tax rates placed in the Library on 23 June 1988 and are for 1988-89. Taxable income is taken as earnings less £4,095, the married man's allowance, in each case. The illustrative 1988-89 community charge in Waltham Forest is £269.

Gasoline

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies he has made of the need to set seasonal Reid vapour pressure limits for gasoline.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Evaporative emissions from gasoline are of interest because of the role they play in the generation of secondary air pollutants, including ozone. A study carried out for the Department by the Harwell laboratory concludes that further controls on Reid vapour pressure would have an insignificant impact on the formation of secondary pollutants.

Planning Applications

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many planning applications were decided *(a)* in under eight weeks; *(b)* between eight and 13 weeks; and *(c)* in over 13 weeks by each planning authority in Staffordshire in the most recent period for which figures are available;

(2) what percentage of planning applications were decided *(a)* in under eight weeks; *(b)* between eight and 13 weeks; and *(c)* in over 13 weeks by each planning authority in Staffordshire in the most recent period for which figures are available; and what is the comparable figure for England as a whole.

Mr. Chope: The information requested on planning decisions made by each planning authority in Staffordshire together with the comparable figure for England is listed in the table:

Planning applications decided, by each planning authority in Staffordshire, and England—July to September 1988

Planning authority	Total decided	Under 8 weeks	Per cent.	Between 8–13 weeks	Per cent.	Over 13 weeks	Per cent.
Cannock Chase	257	210	(82)	27	(10)	20	(8)
East Staffordshire	389	320	(82)	53	(14)	16	(4)
Lichfield	337	223	(66)	85	(25)	29	(9)
Newcastle under Lyme	347	321	(92)	20	(6)	6	(2)
South Staffordshire	327	156	(48)	136	(41)	35	(11)
Stafford	389	304	(78)	62	(16)	23	(6)
Staffordshire Moorland	282	156	(55)	66	(24)	60	(21)
Stoke on Trent	423	295	(70)	105	(25)	23	(5)
Tamworth	326	251	(77)	46	(14)	29	(9)
Peak Park (Staffs section)	41	13	(32)	16	(39)	12	(29)
England	164,044	85,680	(52)	48,172	(29)	30,192	(19)

Litter

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in respect of litter at Victoria station.

Mrs. Virgina Bottomley: None. However, we have received a large number of representations on litter in public areas generally, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will shortly announce proposals for legislation designd to tackle this problem.

Water Authorities (Debt Write-Offs)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the proposed debt write-offs for each regional water authority; and what is the expected remaining debt in each case.

Mr. Howard: It is too early to say. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) on 18 May, *Official Report*, Vol. 153, column *268*.

Dogs

59. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about dog licensing; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on Wednesday 28 June 1989 to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), *Official Report*, Vol. 155, column *479*.

60. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek powers to compel district councils to arrange to round up stray dogs, to advertise for their owners and, after a limited time, either offer those dogs to good homes or arrange for the unclaimed dogs to be put down.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 14 June proposals for giving local authorities new duties and powers for dealing with stray dogs. We will be issuing a consultation paper on these proposals shortly.

Beaches

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which beaches along the south Wales coastline between Cardiff and the Gover peninsular conform to the water quality standards of Economic Community bathing water directive 76/160/EEC; and what consideration he has given to the merits of existing and proposed screened sewage outfalls along this coastline.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have been asked to reply.

Information about bathing waters listed under the directive is as follows:

Trecco bay, Porthcawl
Rest bay, Porthcawl
Aberavon

My Department does not hold information on non-listed waters; I refer my hon. Friend to the chairman of Welsh Water.

My officials are in touch with Welsh Water about its capital programme of improvements for bringing outfalls along this coastline to such standards as will permit listed bathing waters to comply with the terms of directive 76/160/EEC.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which beaches on the south Wales coastline within 10 miles of Swansea attain the standards required under European Economic Community bathing water directive 76/160/EEC.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have been asked to reply.

All bathing waters within 10 miles of Swansea which are listed under the terms of the directive, with the exception of Swansea bay itself, complied with its standards during 1988.

Community Charge

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) by how much the safety net grant of gaining authorities is reduced from when there is no limit where the maximum contribution to the community charge safety net is *(a)* £75 per adult, *(b)* £70 per adult, *(c)* £50 per adult, *(d)* £25 per adult, and *(e)* £10 per adult, on the assumption of a self-financing safety net;

(2) how much additional Exchequer grant would be required if the maximum contribution were to be *(a)* £70 per adult, *(b)* £50 per adult, *(c)* £25 per adult and *(d)* £10 per adult on the assumption of no reduction in the community charge safety net grant to local authorities gaining from the safety net.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is provided in the table on the basis of 1988-89 figures. If the cost of limiting contributions to the safety net were funded by Exchequer grants it would be as shown in column 1. Alternatively, safety net grant receipts could be reduced by an equal amount per adult in receiving areas up to the point at which they no longer receive transitional protection. The maximum reduction in safety net grant per adult is shown in column 2.

Cost in 1988-89 of limits on contributions to safety nets

Contribution limit £	*Column 1 Cost* £ million	*Column 2 Maximum cost* £ per adult
75	114	8
70	134	9
50	254	18
25	529	48
10	769	114

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, for which of the following charges in local authority functions or duties the community charge safety net will make distributional adjustments *(a)* ring fencing of the housing revenue account, *(b)* abolition of the Inner London education authority, *(c)* capital financing charges consequent on the new capital control system, *(d)* pension contributions consequent on the charges being proposed, *(e)* costs of community charge collection, *(f)* costs of community charge rebate and rebate administration and *(g)* continuing costs of maintaining the community charge register.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend has not taken final decisions on the safety net.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has identified all the possible options for needs assessments under the new grant system; and if he will make a statement on which he proposes to adopt.

Mr. Gummer: We are examining a number of possibilities for each service block, including those proposed by the local authority associations. Proposals will not be finalised until the autumn.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the level of community charge for spending at needs assessment for each local authority which would apply in 1989-90 if the proposed local government finance system were in operation; and what assumptions are made to arrive at that answer.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 12 July 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him of Monday 26 June, *Official Report*, Vol. 155, col. *347*.

The detailed assumptions underlying that answer were:

	£ million
Total GRE	27,662
Revenue support grant	9,394
Non domestic rate pool	9,516
Total adult population	36·4

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what mechanisms he intends to use for safety-netting the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend has not made final decisions on the form of the safety net.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had so far with local authorities and industry for the safe recovery and recycling of chlorofluorocarbons contained in discarded refrigerants in relation to Her Majesty's Government's objectives for the protection of the ozone layer.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has regular meetings with local authorities and industry at which these matters are discussed. United Kingdom CFC manufacturers, a number of local authorities and at least one retailer of domestic refrigerators and freezers offer recycling services for used refrigerators free of charge.

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans exist to ensure the safe disposal of both chlorofluorocarbon refrigerant material and chlorofluorocarbon II in the foam in refrigeration and air-cooling equipment under the control of his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Guidelines issued by the Property Services Agency contain advice on the use of CFCs on the Government estate. They insist that at the end of its useful operational life, the refrigerant in commercial or industrial equipment is to be recovered by the PSA or contractors and returned to the refrigerant supplier for reclamation or safe disposal. We do not yet know of a proven technique for the extraction of the CFCs in the insulation.

Regional Water Authorities

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the remuneration for each of the board members of the regional water authorities after vesting, along with any other benefits to be given.

Mr. Ridley: Under the Water Act 1989 all current appointments to water authority boards will end at vesting. Executive and non-executive directors of the successor companies will be appointed at vesting and through to flotation on essentially their existing terms and conditions as water authority board members or officers. Remuneration following flotation will be a matter for the companies themselves.

Water Filter Industry

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what correspondence, discussions, or meetings he has had with the advertising standards authority regarding advertising by the water filter industry.

Mr. Ridley: None.

OFWAT

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there is to be any increase in the number of staff of OFWAT above that which was originally projected.

Mr. Ridley: Yes. The complement for the office of water services will be about 100. The director general's duties have been added to since the number of about 80 was given in the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Water Bill last November.

Water Companies

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what obligations there are on statutory water companies to disclose information about their structure, finances and activities; and what are the comparable obligations of private limited companies.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 12 July 1989]:* The requirements for disclosure of information about the structure, finances and activities of the statutory water companies are set out in their local statutes and company legislation; and the requirements for private companies are set out in company legislation.

National Exhibition Centre

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes replying to the letters of 7 April and 26 May from the chief executive of Birmingham city council, concerning the impact on the national exhibition centre of the capital control proposals contained in the Local Government and Housing Bill.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 12 July 1989]:* My right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government wrote to the leader of Birmingham city council and Councillor Reg Hales about the national exhibition centre on 10 April, and I replied to their latest letters, of 26 May and 7 July, on 11 July.

Radioactive Liquid Waste

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites in England are authorised to discharge radioactive liquid waste to the public sewer.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 11 July 1989]:* There are 808 premises in England which are currently authorised under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 to discharge liquid radioactive waste. the authorisations prescribe discharges into drainage systems, which include public sewers. All authorisations contain strict conditions, including the quantities of radioactive liquid that may be discharged.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drugs

9. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made towards further bilateral treaties to provide for the confiscation of the assets of drug traffickers.

Mr. Hurd: I have this week agreed on the need for early progress towards a confiscation agreement with the Interior Minister of Pakistan. We have already signed bilateral agreements with the United States of America, Canada, the Bahamas, Australia, Switzerland and, in the last few weeks, Spain, and have concluded similar arrangements with Bermuda. Discussions are also in progress with West Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Jamaica, Malaysia, Sweden andGuyana, and we expect further agreements soon.

54. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department is taking against the threat to this country from cocaine and crack.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) on 15 June 1989 at column *1113.*

55. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many seizures of cocaine have been made in the Merseyside area this year; and in how many cases crack was found to be present.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Merseyside police have made eight seizures of cocaine in the period January-May 1989. One of these seizures has been confirmed as being in the form of crack.

51. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the work of the ministerial group on the misuse of drugs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) on 21 April at column *517*. The ministerial group is next due to meet on 26 July, under the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend, when particular attention will be given to the threat to this country from cocaine and crack.

33. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about drug abuse among young people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We receive a steady stream of representations from hon. Members and members of the public about drug abuse among young people. We take a very serious view of the problem of drug misuse and have developed a comprehensive strategy set out in "Tackling Drug Misuse" a copy of which is in the Library. A number of measures under the strategy—for example, drug education in schools—are aimed specifically at young people.

21. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he is taking to enhance international co-operation in respect of the trafficking in drugs in the light of the forthcoming European single market.

Mr. Hurd: In my contacts with our European partners I stress the need for early ratification by all countries of the 1988 United Nations convention against the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. We shall maintain the frontier checks necessary to control drug trafficking and promote closer international co-operation between law enforcement agencies.

Crime Prevention

14. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has discussed joint crime prevention initiatives with the local authority associations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is regular consultation between Home Office officials and local authority representatives on a wide range of issues including crime prevention. This will continue.

North America (Ministerial Visit)

16. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the visit to North America by his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend's recent valuable visit to the United States and the Bahamas provided graphic evidence of the destructive effects on individuals and the community of widespread misuse of and trafficking in cocaine and crack. He studied both means of enforcement and of reducing demand. We already have in place a comprehensive strategy for tackling misuse. The ministerial group on the misuse of drugs is considering urgently how this strategy can be strengthened and extended.

Hong Kong

17. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about entry into the United Kingdom of citizens from Hong Kong in the future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Within the last two months some 40 letters have been received in the Home Office from right hon. and hon. Members and from members of the public.

Inquests

18. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases of a death of a patient on National Health Service premises in the past three years an inquest has been refused when it has been recommended by a coroner.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Secretary has power to order an inquest only if a coroner applies in the absence of a body. There was one application in this period for a death on National Health Service premises. It was concerned with the abortion in Carlisle City general hospital in July 1987.

Gaelic Broadcasting

19. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has made to Comunn Na Gaidhlig's submission on Gaelic broadcasting.

25. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has made to Comunn Na Gaidhlig's submission on Gaelic broadcasting.

Mr. Renton: We are considering the proposals submitted by Comunn Na Gaidhlig on this subject.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any progress to report on provision for Gaelic broadcasting.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave earlier today to questions from the hon. Members for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) and for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie).

58. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what conclusions he has reached on the future of broadcasting in Gaelic.

Mr. Renton: No conclusions have been reached at this stage as we have yet to complete our consideration of the proposals submitted to us on this subject.

Burglary

20. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest figures for burglary in England and Wales.

Mr. Hurd: There were 801,500 burglaries in the 12 months to March 1989 compared to 886,400 for the previous 12 months, a decrease of almost 85,000 or 10 per cent. This information is published in table 4 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 20/89, a copy of which is in the Library.

53. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures his Department is taking to reduce burglary in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: In their bid to reduce crime, of which burglary is a major element, the Government have increased police manpower by 14,138 and civilian manpower by 8,137 since 1979. The Government are also convinced of the importance of community involvement in tackling crime. That is why we have encouraged neighbourhood watch schemes which can do much to prevent crime. There are now over 66,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales covering approximately 3¼ million households. In addition there are 390 crime prevention panels and 165 junior panels which are active in spreading the crime prevention message. In the 12 months to March 1989 burglaries have fallen by 10 per cent. compared with the 12 months to March 1988.

We are constantly looking at new initiatives in our effort to combat crime. One such initiative is the safer cities programme which is the Home Office contribution to the Government's action for cities strategy. We have also launched Crime Concern, an independent organisation, whose efforts are directed at the reduction of crime.

Nazi War Criminals

22. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he received in the month of June regarding Nazi war criminals in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: During June I received 20 representations and one parliamentary petition on the subject of war criminals in the United Kingdom.

Television Franchises

23. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what powers the Independent Television Commission will have to ensure that individuals found to be unfit to hold a television broadcasting licence in other countries, are prevented from involvement in television companies and channels in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced further proposals to limit broadcasting ownership on 19 May at column 317. We are considering further the detail of the enforcement powers which the ITC and radio authority will need. We envisage that, in exercising them, they will reach their own decisions rather than necessarily following those reached by regulatory bodies in other jurisdictions.

36. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received any representations supporting his policy that television franchises be auctioned.

Mr. Renton: We have received a number of submissions supporting the principle of competitive tender for the award of licences for commercial television and radio.

Fresh Start

24. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the staffing levels in top security prisons following the implementation of fresh start.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As at 1 June 1989 the number of officers (including principal and senior officers) in dispersal prisons was 9 per cent. higher than two years previously when none of the establishments had moved to fresh start working.

Murderers (Release)

26. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have died over the past 25 years at the hands of previously convicted killers; and what was the average length of sentence served by murderers released from prison over the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information on the number of suspects convicted of homicide who had previous homicide convictions is published annually in Criminal statistics, England and Wales (tables 4.9 and 4.10 of the latest issue, for 1987, Cm. 498), copies of which are in the Library.

During the 25 year period 1963-87, 51 persons in England and Wales were killed by persons previously convicted of homicide.

Average times served by sentenced murderers released on licence from prison service establishments are given in the table. The average figures do not take account of the longest periods being served by some of those given life sentences following the abolition of capital punishment in 1965 who have not yet been released. They also exclude persons who have died in custody or been discharged for other reasons.

My right hon. Friend has made it clear that those convicted of the most heinous murders can normally expect to service at least 20 years in prison and in some cases even longer; and no life sentence prisoner is released, no matter how long he or she has served, unless my right hon. Friend is personally as satisfied as it is reasonably possible to be that there is no risk to the community.

Average time[1] spent under sentence in prison service establishments in England and Wales by prisoners first released in 1984-88 on licence from a life sentence for murder

Year of release	*Average years[2] under life sentence*
1984	10·50
1985	10·25
1986	11·00
1987	11·50
1988	10·00

[1] Excluding any time spent on remand in custody.
[2] Estimates rounded to the nearest quarter.

Blasphemy

28. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the Law Commission recommendation regarding the law of blasphemy.

Mr. Hurd: In its 1985 report on offences against religion and public worship, the Law Commission recommended —by a majority—that common law offences of blasphemy and blasphemous libel should be abolished and not replaced. A minority proposed in a note of dissent the creation of a new statutory offence of blasphemy applying to all religions. The Government have no plans to legislate on blasphemy.

Border Controls

29. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he proposes to take to dismantle completely border controls between Britain and other European Community countries.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 14 December 1988 at cols *576-7*. That essentially remains the position, and it was last extensively discussed in this House on 4 May at columns *395-417*.

Arwen Ace Gun (Police)

30. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to acquire the baton round gun Arwen Ace for police forces in England and Wales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 13 April at columns *707-81*.

Bill of Rights

31. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans for introducing a Bill of Rights.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Press Law Review

32. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the terms of reference of the independent press law review group which he announced on 21 April.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) on 5 July 1989 at column *193*.

Car Crime

34. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures his Department is taking to reduce car crime in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) on 15 June at column *510*.

It is encouraging that in the 12 months ending March 1989 recorded offences of theft from vehicles fell by 9 per cent. compared to the corresponding period last year, and offences of theft or unauthorised taking of a vehicle fell by 6 per cent.

Rural Violence

35. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to implement the recommendations contained in his Department's recent report on rural violence.

Mr. Hurd: We have strengthened the law on sales of alcohol to underage drinkers and increased the penalties available to the courts. We have issued advice to the police and courts about powers available to deal with outbreaks of disorder. We have encouraged the drinks industry to increase the production and promotion of low and no alcohol drinks. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, as chairman of the ministerial group on alcohol misuse, together with my hon. Friends the Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Home Department will shortly meet representatives of the drinks, fast food and leisure industries and the licensed trade to discuss other matters raised by the report. These moves by the Government need to be backed up by local action, with local organisations working together to identify any particular problems in their areas and the steps which might be taken. The need for such co-operation was spelt out in inter-Departmental guidance issued in February, which gave advice about local action to tackle all forms of alcohol misuse.

Police Forces (Merger)

37. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if consideration is being given to merging any shire police forces.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has no plans to create new combined police forces. I would also refer the hon. Member to the reply which was given to questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Rydale (Mr. Greenway) and the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) on 11 May at column *529*.

Safer Cities Initiative

38. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the safer cities initiative.

Mr. Hurd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to his question on 11 July at column *421*.

Crime

39. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the measures which his Department is taking to reduce crime in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Hurd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him on 11 May at columns *543* and *544*.

44. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the most recent available figures for recorded crime in West Sussex.

Mr. Hurd: The available information relates to the police force area of Sussex. Information for 1988 was published in tables 7 and 8 of "Home Office Statistical Bulletin 7/89", a copy of which is in the Library. I have also sent some further details of the figures for 1988 for their local force area to all right hon. and hon. Members for constituencies in England and Wales and placed copies of those further details in the Library. In the first quarter of 1989 Sussex police recorded 4 per cent. more offences than in the first quarter of 1988.

Welsh Television Channels

40. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the number of people living in north Wales who cannot receive Welsh television channels.

Mr. Renton: I understand that about 15,650 people living in North Wales are unable to receive Welsh language television programmes because of mountainous terrain and shortage of frequencies. There are, however, plans to extend coverage to a further 1,000 people in the Gronant area.

Mugging

41. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department is taking to reduce the number of muggings in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) on 15 June at column *507*.

Punishment (Community)

42. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement about his policy with regard to punishment in the community.

Mr. Hurd: The Green Paper "Punishment, Custody and the Community" (Cm. 424) described the policies we are pursuing and our proposals for future changes. We are at present considering how best to take these forward.

Prisons

43. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional prison places have become available since 1979; how many additional places are expected to be provided this year; and how many additional places are expected to become available in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since 1979 more than 6,000 new places have been added to the prison estate, over half of which have been provided at the eight new prisons which have opened since 1985. The first phase of a new prison for 350 prisoners has recently opened in converted buildings at Banstead in Surrey, and by the end of the financial year it is planned that a total of nearly 2,000 new places will have been added to the estate.

Through a combination of more new prisons, additions to existing prisons and redevelopment and place producing schemes, about 17,000 new places will also be delivered between the end of this financial year and the mid-1990s. By that time a total of about 25,000 places will have been added to the system.

Police Co-operation

45. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress his Department is making in fostering greater co-operation between British police forces and their counterparts elsewhere in Europe.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We attach great importance to closer co-operation between police forces in tackling crime, and have actively sought to strengthen bilateral links. My right hon. Friend recently signed an arrangement with France providing for further practical co-operation on action against terrorism, drug trafficking and organised crime. A similar arrangement was signed with Italy earlier in the year. Further action is in hand to improve bilateral and multilateral co-operation in a number of areas including mutual legal assistance and extradition arrangements, the exchange of drugs intelligence, exchange of liaison officers, and the confiscation of drug traffickers' assets; a bilateral drugs confiscation agreement with Spain was signed recently.

Theft

46. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures his Department is taking to reduce theft in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Our crime prevention handbook "Practical Ways to Crack Crime" contains advice on how the risk of theft of all kinds can be reduced. Measures that can be taken to prevent theft from shops were put forward by a working group of the Home Office standing committee on crime prevention in its 1986 report; the working group on car crime, which reported last year, made a number of recommendations about the prevention of theft of and from cars, which are now being examined. The number of theft offences recorded in England and Wales during 1988 was 1,931,000, nearly 6 per cent. fewer than in 1987.

Alcohol-related Crime

47. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of crimes committed are alcohol-related.

Mr. Hurd: We do not collect information centrally. But a number of surveys and studies, including Home Office Research Study No. 108 "Drinking and Disorder: A study of non-Metropolitan Disorder", have pointed to a strong association between alcohol misuse and public disorder in particular. Advice on crime prevention is accordingly included in recent Home Office and interdepartmental guidance on alcohol misuse.

Young Offenders

48. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those initiatives that his Department is supporting to encourage replacement of custody for young offenders.

Mr. Hurd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from him on 11 May at column *531*. Grants have already been made to the following voluntary organisations: the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders; the National Children's Home; the Rainer Foundation; Community Service Volunteers. Other applications are under consideration.

Passports

49. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on delays in processing passport applications and renewals.

56. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on the processing of passport applications at the Liverpool passport office.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 4 July at columns *99-100*.

Hospital Radio

50. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking an exclusive radio frequency for hospital radio.

Mr. Renton: I received a letter today from the hon. Member on behalf of the National Association of Hospital Broadcasting Organisations. It has been invited to discuss the matter with the radio authority in due course, and meanwhile to meet Home Office officials.

European Convention on Human Rights

52. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received supporting the inclusion of the European convention on human rights in British law; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has received one such representation in this Session.

Conservative Family Campaign

57. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Conservative Family Campaign; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) will be meeting representatives of the Conservative Family Campaign later this month to discuss young people's involvement in crime.

Motoring Offences

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in the last year for which figures are available were *(a)* cautioned, *(b)* prosecuted, and *(c)* convicted for (i) driving or parking in or otherwise obstructing bus lanes, (ii) parking on pavements, (iii) cycling on pavements, and (iv) careless driving by failing to give way to pedestrians when turning at junctions.

Mr. John Patten: The details requested on motoring offences are not separately recorded in the information collected centrally. The available information on court proceedings and cautions for parking, obstruction and careless driving offences is published annually in a Home Office statistical bulletin "Offences relating to motor vehicles, England and Wales" and in a volume of supplementary tables, both of which are in the Library. The information available centrally, which may be incomplete, indicates that in 1987, 540 persons were prosecuted for the offence of riding on a footway of whom 500 were guilty; about 1,000 persons were cautioned in 1986 (separate information was not collected in 1987).

Police Vans (Deaths)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have *(a)* died and *(b)* been injured in cellular police vans in each year since they were introduced.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As the hon. Member is aware, there was one death in these circumstances on 19 June 1989.

Information about deaths of persons in police custody including the place and cause of death and the circumstances surrounding the death have been set out, since 1980, in the annual reports of the chief inspector of constabulary and the Metropolitan police commissioner. There do not appear to have been any previous deaths in cellular police vans. Information about injuries is not recorded centrally.

Cellular police vans were introduced by individual police forces at different times over a period of many years. They were first used by the Lancashire police in 1984.

Criminal Justice Act 1988

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which sections of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 have not yet been implemented; and if he will make a statement explaining the reasons why these sections have not yet been implemented.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* Section 43 of the Act which widens the powers of the Court of Appeal to order a retrial, section 146 and schedule 13, which reform rules of evidence in service courts, and section 159, which creates a right of appeal against orders restricting reporting of and access to Crown Court proceedings will come into force on 31 July. Section 119, which increases the upper age limit for jurors, will come into force on 15 February 1990.

Sections 1-22 and schedule 1, which relate to extradition, are consolidated by the Extradition Bill which has been introduced in the House of Lords. The Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent before the summer recess, and its provisions will take effect two months later.

The implementation of section 29, which concerns the issue of letters of request to foreign courts seeking their assistance in obtaining evidence, has been delayed while we have considered the role of such a provision in the context of more comprehensive legislation on mutual legal assistance, for which we will bring forward proposals at the earliest possible opportunity.

Further consideration is being given to the implementation of section 32 in so far as it is not already in force. This relates to the giving of evidence through a live television link by witnesses who are outside the United Kingdom.

Section 65, which concerns the powers of civilian fine enforcement officers, will be brought into force once the preparation of related court rules is complete.

Sections 108-117 and schedules 6 and 7 establish the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board on a statutory basis. Under schedules 6 and 7, detailed procedural rules are required for the statutory scheme, and we are discussing the content of these with the board.

Sections 150 and 151 extend to Customs and Excise officers police powers to grant bail and re-arrest if a suspect seems likely to abscond. Because of operational difficulties which would arise in practice from their interaction with provisions in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 these provisions have not yet been brought into force.

All 132 other sections of, and 12 schedules to, the Act are already in force.

Belle Vale Police Station

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Merseyside as to the number of formal complaints lodged at the Belle Vale police station, Liverpool.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable that since 1 January 1989 there has been one formal complaint lodged at Belle Vale police station.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Merseyside as to the number of arrests of minors by police stationed at Belle Vale during the last six months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable that since 1 January 1989, 116 arrests of persons under the age of 17 have been made by officers from the Belle Vale sub-division.

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what prosecutions have successfully taken place in each of the past five years involving the wrongful use of orange badges for the disabled.

Mr. John Patten: The latest available information, which may be incomplete, relates to the period 1983 to 1986; in each year fewer than 20 persons were found guilty of offences under the orange badge scheme. After 1986 these offences were not separately indentifiable in the records of court proceedings collected centrally.

Racehorses (Drugs)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many criminal cases have been brought before the courts in the past three years involving drug administering for gain of thoroughbred racehorses;

(2) if he has plans to seek to restrict the administration of drugs on thoroughbred racehorses for the purpose of enhancing their potential;

(3) if he will act immediately to ban the administering of anabolic steroids on racehorses in training in the United Kingdom.

(4) if he will make it his policy to investigate fully the use of drugs on thoroughbred racehorses in the United Kingdom;

(5) if the Government have any plans to investigate the drug testing systems currently undertaken in the British thoroughbred and breeding industry;

(6) if the Government have recently monitored the drug testing systems involved in the British horseracing and breeding industry.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 9 June 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 22 December at column *428*. It is an offence under the Medicines (Hormone Growth Promoters) (Prohibition of Use) Regulations 1988 to administer hormone growth promoters to any horse except for specified therapeutic or zootechnical purposes.

Information on the number of criminal cases brought before the courts in the past three years involving the administration for gain of drugs to thoroughbred racehorses is not readily available and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Malicious Communications Act 1988

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints there have been under the Malicious Communications Act 1988; and what was their outcome.

Mr. John Patten: No information is yet available on the number of offences committed under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 which did not come into force until September 1988.

Litter (Durham)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been prosecuted for litter offences in each of the last four years nationally and in Durham City constituency.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is in the table. Such information for England and Wales only is published annually in volume 1 of the "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables", copies of which can be found in the Library. Information for 1988 is not yet available.

	England and Wales		*Durham*[1]	
	Total proceeded against	*Total found guilty*	*Total proceeded against*	*Total found guilty*
1984	1,552	1,427	3	3
1985	1,510	1,389	3	3
1986	1,600	1,425	9	9
1987	1,888	1,694	5	4

[1] Data are not collected centrally for the City of Durham alone but for the whole of the Durham petty sessional division.

Racial Hatred

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times and in what instances he used his powers to prevent marches likely to stir up racial hatred in *(a)* 1986, *(b)* 1987, *(c)* 1988 and *(d)* 1989.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under the Public Order Act 1986 public processions may be prohibited with the Secretary of State's consent only if the chief officer of police of the areas concerned reasonably believes that the imposition of conditions under section 12 of the Act will not be sufficient to prevent the holding of public processions from resulting in serious public disorder. Consent on these grounds was given to banning orders on one occasion in 1986, four times in 1987, three times in 1988 and has been given three times in 1989.

Dogs

27. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce compulsory muzzling in public for particular breeds of dog.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As I explained in the debate on the Adjournment on 15 June, I am not persuaded that this is the right course to take.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration his Department has given to introducing schemes to encourage dog owners to have dogs neutered as a move to reducing the dog population.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am not persuaded that this is properly a matter for the Government. The care and wellbeing of pets is the responsibility of owners.

On the general matters of local authority powers in relation to stray dogs, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment made a statement in the debate on the Local Government and Housing Bill on 14 June at column 1053.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration his Department has given to widening the authority of parking wardens to apprehend and report *(a)* people allowing their dogs to foul footpaths and *(b)* people committing litter offences.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans to extend the functions of traffic wardens beyond their primary purpose, which is to assist the police in the enforcement of road traffic law.

Drink-Driving

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions for drinking and driving offences there were in 1987-88 and for 1989 to date nationally and in Durham City constituency.

Mr. John Patten: The available information relates to findings of guilt for driving and so on, after consuming alcohol or taking drugs and is published annually in a Home Office statistical bulletin "Offences relating to motor vehicles, England and Wales". Table 9 of issue 32/88 gives the figures for 1987. In 1987, there were 115,000 findings of guilt for such offences of which 139 were recorded for Durham magistrates' court. Figures for 1988 will be published in the autumn.

Horse Racing

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what active support he is giving to the preservation of small racecourses in Great Britain.

Mr. John Patten: The Horserace Betting Levy Board has a responsibility for supporting and promoting, as cost-effectively as possible, the provision of horseracing as an attractive, country-wide entertainment. To that end, the board devotes a substantial and increasing proportion of its resources to improving and sustaining racecourses of all sizes. Details are given in the board's annual report, a copy of which is in the Library.

Data Protection

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many local authorities in England and Wales have so far registered for the basis of the poll tax registration with those responsible for the Data Protection Act 1984; which councils have been refused registration and for what reasons; what further guidance in addition to the community charge practice notes the Data Protection Registrar has issued to local authorities; if he will place a copy of such guidance in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* Community charge registration officers have to register under the Data Protection Act for compiling and maintaining community charge registers if those registers are to be kept on computer.

The data protection registrar, who reports directly to Parliament, informs me that by the end of June, he had identified 293 applications from CCROs for new register entries for the purpose of compiling and maintainng a community charge register. In addition, a number of local authorities had applied in their own name to register for this purpose.

I understand that so far, one application by Trafford borough council has been refused on the grounds that some of the information asked for was not necessary for the CCRO's statutory functions and that the form did not explain that there was no duty to provide information about relationships of people in households. In the light of undertakings given by the CCRO about the data to be processed for registration a revised application is being considered.

The registrar has written to all CCROs in England and arrangements have been made for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 14 July 1989

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ghana

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further support he is providing for Ghana's economic recovery.

Mr. Chris Patten: The United Kingdom continues to be a major supporter of Ghana's economic recovery programme. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, signed a grant agreement for a further £20 million balance of payments finance when she visited Ghana at the end of June. This brings to £92·5 million the total of our balance of payments support to Ghana since its economic recovery programme began in 1983.

Brazil (Minister's Visit)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the visit of the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) to Brazil to discuss rain forest problems.

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of the objectives achieved by the Minister for Overseas Development on his recent visit to Brazil.

Mr. Chris Patten: The main purpose of my visit was to sign, on 5 July, a memorandum of understanding on technical co-operation on environmental matters. On that day I also met President Sarney and other leading Brazilian figures. The agreement is the first of its kind which Brazil has made with an industrialised country and will provide the framework for a significant contribution to Brazil's environmental problems, especially in forestry where we have unique expertise.

I also visited Sao Paulo and the Amazon region where I had discussions with the major research institutions. I saw our very successful Royal Geographical Society project at Maraca, visited an area reserved for the Yanomani Indians and saw a hospital provided for them.

Our additional technical co-operation programme, the details of which we will now discuss with the Brazilian authorities, is likely to cover five areas: first, urban environment, in particular sewage and water treatment; secondly, the sustainable management of the Amazon rain forest, where we hope to be involved in establishing a new biological reserve in the Xingu river area; thirdly, collaborative research on the relationship between the forests and climate, involving the Institute of Hydrology; fourthly, research into the great potential of the genetic resources of the Amazon; and we hope to begin soon with a research project into aromatic plants undertaken by the Goeldi museum in Belem; and, fifthly, training in the United Kingdom and in Brazil in matters related to these areas.

The visit shows that important progress is possible in these fields if the countries concerned adopt a co-operative spirit. Throughout my visit, I made it clear that we recognise Brazil's sensitiveness and sovereignty and the Brazilian Government responded in a helpful and positive way. I am sure that both countries will gain from the partnership.

Overseas Aid (Anniversary Review)

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the cost of publishing the anniversary review of British overseas aid.

Mr. Chris Patten: It cost just under £105,000 to produce 20,000 copies of the anniversary review, a unit cost of £5·23. Despite more pages, photographs and graphics this was less than the unit cost of previous annual reviews.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mail Prices

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects the Post Office to announce the new prices for first and second class mail from October.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 13 July 1989]:* Postal tariffs are a matter for the Post Office board. The Post Office announced on 3 July that it had proposed to the Post Office Users National Council that the standard charges should go to by 1p, to 20p for first class and to 15p for second class letters, from 2 October.

WALES

Local Government Finance

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, when he will make a statement on local government finance for 1990-91.

Mr. Peter Walker: In due course.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he first became aware of the October 1988 meeting between the chairman and chief executive of the Welsh Development Agency and the regional director and the senior investment executive of the west Wales office of the Welsh Development Agency at which management buy-out proposals were discussed.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave on 5 July to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), *Official Report*, col. *182.*

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give full details of factory building completed in west Wales by the Welsh Development Agency for each year from 1983-84 to the present, giving the location and description of each site and the area of building involved.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

(a) Advance Factory Build

(i) 1983-84

Cillefwr Ind Est, Carmathen 8 units totalling 9k sq ft.
Whitland Ind Est, Whitland 12 units totalling 24k sq ft.
Dafen Ind Park, Dafen, Llanelli 6 units totalling 80k sq ft.
Thornton Ind Est, Milford Haven 1 unit totalling 10k sq ft.
Salterns Ind Est, Tenby 17 units totalling 32k sq ft.

(ii) 1984-85

Dafen Ind Park, Dafen. Llanelli 4 units totalling 70k sq ft

(iii) 1986-87

Kingswood Ind Est, Pembroke Dock 4 units totalling 5k sq ft

(iv) 1988-89

London Road, Pembroke Dock 3 units totalling 20k sq ft
Cillefwr Ind Est, Carmarthen 5 units totalling 8k sq ft

(b) Bespoke Projects

(i) 1984-85

Bespoke extension of 5k sq ft for Record Wire Wheels at Llandovery.

(ii) 1987-88

Bespoke extension of 3k sq ft for Animal Food Products at Llanybyther.
Bespoke extension of 1k sq ft for Neyland Training Initiative at Great Honyborough, Milford Haven.

(iii) 1988-89

Bespoke extension of 4k sq ft for Record Wire Wheels at Llandovery.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if there are proposals under consideration in any of the regional offices of the Welsh Development Agency for contracting out *(a)* services currently provided by the Welsh Development Agency in the investment and business advisory field or *(b)* work as local agents for land reclamation, urban renewal and inward investment;

(2) what consideration has been given to contracting out services currently provided by the west Wales region of the Welsh Development Agency in the fields of *(a)* investment and business advice, *(b)* land reclamation, *(c)* urban renewal and *(d)* inward investment; and if he will provide details.

Mr. Peter Walker: I would expect the Welsh Development Agency to keep under continuing review opportunities for private sector involvement. I would naturally consider any proposal put to me by the agency for contracting out services where this would guarantee an equivalent or better level of service and a lesser cost to the taxpayer. There are, however, no such proposals before me at present.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his reply of 5 July, *Official Report*, column *181*, how much of the 62,000 sq ft of factory building in west Wales referred to has been completed to date.

Mr. Peter Walker: As I informed the hon. Gentleman in the reply to which he refers, the agency intends to start work on this factory space in the current financial year.

NHS Hospitals

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many National Health Service hospitals in use today in Wales were built *(a)* before 1914 and *(b)* before 1939; and how many National Health Service hospitals have been started since 1979.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information on the number of hospitals built before 1939 is not available centrally. Since 1979, seven new hospitals have been built and one is due for completion at the end of this year. Major developments have been started at three existing hospitals. Many other smaller developments have been built since 1979 or are in the process of construction throughout Wales. Since 1979, £700 million (at 1989-90 prices) will have been invested in the capital estates of hospital and community health services in Wales.

Planning Applications

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what directions are given to Cadw to resolve planning applications by negotiation rather than by public inquiry; and if he will investigate the relative cost to his Department of resolving queries on applications by *(a)* negotiation and *(b)* by public inquiry under section 33 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

Mr. Peter Walker: In additon to its functions in relation to listed buildings, Cadw's role as a branch of my Department is to advise both myself and local authorities, as planning authorities, on the effect of development proposals on ancient monuments. While Cadw is willing to discuss proposals and alternative schemes with developers before a planning application is made, it will also in appropriate cases maintain objections to development for which an application has been made and ask me to consider calling it in for my own determination. Where I agree, the public inquiry that follows ensures compliance with the principles of openness, fairness and impartiality and serves to maintain public confidence in the quality of decisions and the process by which they are reached. Negotiation on alternative proposals is not possible once the application is called in and is thus not an alternative to negotiation before the application; nor can costs be usefully compared.

ESA Payments

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the policy of Welsh Water in respect of the clawback of ESA payments made to tenants of farms in Welsh Water's ownership.

Mr. Peter Walker: This is a matter for the board of that authority.

Land (Public Ownership)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what records he maintains of land acquired into public ownership for allotment purposes; and for how long these records have been kept.

Mr. Peter Walker: None. Records on land acquired for allotment purposes are not held centrally.

Football Spectators Bill (Working Party)

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many of his working party on the Football Spectators Bill represent non-Football League clubs in Wales;

(2) whether he will list the members of his working party on the Football Spectators Bill, and their status and qualifications.

Mr. Peter Walker: Membership is as follows:

Mr. Richard Wallace (Chairman), Under Secretary, Welsh Office.
Mr. Robin Baker, Superintendent, North Wales Police.
Mr. Haydn Davies, Assistant Chief Constable, South Wales Constabulary.
Mr. Chris Whalley, Community Affairs Officer, The Football League Ltd.
Mr. Alan Evans, Secretary, Football Association of Wales.
Mr. Tony Clemo, Chairman, Cardiff City AFC.
Mr. Tony Rance, General Manager, Wrexham AFC.
Mr. George Taylor, Company Secretary, Swansea City AFC.
Mr. Linford Tatham, Director, Sports Council for Wales.
Mr. David Powell (Secretary), Senior Executive Officer, Welsh Office.

The Football Association of Wales represents the interests of football at all levels, and the Sports Council for Wales is concerned with sport as a whole, including football.

TRANSPORT

Airport Security

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if any categories of person will be exempt from security searches when moving between the air and land sides at Britain's 19 principal airports, when he introduces new security regulations in October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The requirements for certain airports to search personnel working at the airport before they enter restricted areas was promulgated in directions under the Aviation Security Act issued by the Department on 5 April. The search requirements come into force on 1 October. The only people who will be exempt are staff engaged on certain aviation security duties and persons (such as police officers, Customs and immigration officials) acting in the course of statutory duties which give them a right of entry to such areas in order to carry out those duties. The directions require airport managers to endeavour to persuade persons with statutory rights of entry to consent to being searched, and the Department has reached agreement with the police, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and the immigration service on the regime which will apply to their staff.

Transport (Elderly and Disabled People)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre inspectors are reclassifying vehicles used in dial-a-ride and similar schemes for elderly and disabled people in Scotland; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish what information he has on the effect of removing vehicle excise duty exemption from ambulance class vehicles used in dial-a-ride schemes for elderly and disabled people.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I will write to the hon. Lady.

Flights (Cancellation)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many flights in and out of United Kingdom airports had to be cancelled as a result of staffing shortages at West Drayton on each day of the week commencing 1 July; and if he will make a statement on the extent of and reasons for the shortages.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall ask the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to write to the hon. Member.

London-Manchester Shuttle

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ask the Director General of Fair Trading to investigate the British Airways shuttle service between Manchester and London to see if they have sufficient staff, planes, equipment and air traffic slots to provide the service as advertised.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. We are not aware of any evidence to suggest that British Airways lacks sufficient staff, aircraft, or equipment to operate the service adequately. Air traffic control slots can be requested only by the operator up to 2¼ hours before take-off, and the timing of the slots allocated depend on the traffic conditions prevailing at the time.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with British Rail in producing a business plan for the Channel tunnel rail link; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I have asked British Rail to prepare an outline investment appraisal of its proposals for the Channel tunnel rail link.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice has been given to date by the independent Safety Authority to the Intergovernmental Commission on the Channel tunnel on whether people should remain in their own road vehicles whilst in transit through the Channel tunnel; and what further advice is expected from the commission and on what time scale.

Mr. Portillo: In 1988, the Safety Authority recommended to the Intergovernmental Commission that design work for the Channel tunnel project could continue on the assumption that passengers in private cars would be allowed to remain in their vehicles in shuttle trains. A final decision on this was subject to Eurotunnel producing further evidence about the procedures and arrangements required to ensure the safety of passengers (for example, dealing with emergencies, fire detection and extinction etc.). A substantial amount of further work has been carried out by Eurotunnel, in particular tests on vehicle fires and procedures for the evacuation of passengers in emergencies. The Safety Authority is currently evaluating this and other relevant evidence as a basis for its eventual advice to the Intergovernmental Commission on the principle of the non-segregation of passengers and their vehicles. Decisions are likely to be reached by the commission before the end of the year and will be made public.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the debt outstanding on the Severn bridge for each year since the bridge opened and the toll revenue collected each year since it opened.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The figures are as follows:

	Income £ million	Debt £ million
1966-67	0·33	13·62
1967-68	0·74	14·55
1968-69	0·81	14·97
1969-70	0·87	15·29
1970-71	0·93	15·62
1971-72	1·00	15·91
1972-73	1·19	16·17
1973-74	1·21	16·92
1974-75	1·21	17·94
1975-76	1·22	19·66
1976-77	1·25	21·13
1977-78	1·24	23·70
1978-79	1·33	25·93
1979-80	2·13	27·54
1980-81	2·76	28·91
1981-82	2·75	30·97
1982-83	2·85	36·79
1983-84	2·84	46·07
1984-85	2·98	56·03
1985-86	5·31	65·07
1986-87	4·40	76·77
1987-88	9·07	85·23

A1 (Motorway Status)

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects his Department's consideration of converting the whole of the A1 from London to the North East to motorway status to be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* We will be commissioning studies by consultants shortly. They will involve a good deal of work. The aim is to complete these and other studies announced in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" in time for the next regular road programme review.

EMPLOYMENT

Grant Aid

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much in total grant aid has been made available under the following schemes for each of the last five years *(a)* assistance with fares to work scheme, *(b)* adaptation to premises and equipment scheme and *(c)* personal reader service scheme.

Mr. Lee: The information requested on *(a)* the assistance with fares to work (FTW) scheme, *(b)* the adaptation to premises and equipment (APE) scheme and *(c)* the personal reader service (PRS) scheme is as follows:

Year	FTW £	APE £	PRS £
1984-85	397,000	244,000	119,000
1985-86	460,000	295,000	210,000
1986-87	589,000	256,000	329,000
1987-88	694,000	404,000	325,000
1988-89	853,000	423,000	387,000

Special Aids to Employment Scheme

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the approximate cost of the special aids to employment scheme for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: The cost of the special aids to employment scheme for each of the last five years is as follows:

Year	Cost £
1984-85	927,000
1985-86	1,094,000
1986-87	1,700,000
1987-88	2,319,000
1988-89	3,361,000

Job Interview Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the job interview guarantee scheme.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 20 June 1989]:* The job interview guarantee will link the assistance already available through jobclubs and the employment service with new measures to enable longer term unemployed people to take job vacancies.

These will include a job preparation course, tailored to meet employers' specific needs and "work trials", which offer short periods of work experience with potential employers to unemployed people while they remain on benefit. Where people need training for the vacancies on offer, training under employment training tailored to the employer's needs may be made available.

In return, employers will enter into agreements with the employment service under which they guarantee to interview unemployed people who have taken one of these options for the vacancies they have available.

The cities in which the job interview guarantee scheme will be piloted have now been chosen. They are:

Dundee
Glasgow
Newcastle
Sunderland
Leeds
Lower Don Valley (Sheffield/Rotherham)
Manchester
Salford
Liverpool
Birmingham
Wolverhampton
Nottingham
Leicester
London—Spitafields
Docklands
Southwark/Lewisham
Bristol
Plymouth (Davenport)
Cardiff
Merthyr Tydfil

The scheme will be targeted on selected disadvantaged areas within these cities.

Preparatory work in these locations is under way, and it is hoped that the first agreements will be made within the next few weeks.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Community Care (Durham)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what statistical information he has as to the reasons given to applicants by social fund officers at the local office in Durham City for the nil awards in respect of an application for community care grants.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table provides the statistical information available for the 1988-89 year.

Unsuccessful applications for community care grants by reason for refusal at Durham ILO

	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	Total
Savings over £500 meet the full cost	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Not in receipt of IS and unlikely to qualify	0	0	1	3	5	1	4	2	0	1	4	1	22
Item(s) excluded by Direction	0	2	1	0	2	3	1	0	0	2	4	1	16
Applicant excluded by Direction	0	0	0	12	17	21	14	13	7	3	6	0	93
Applied for less than £30	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	5
Adjusted amount less than £30	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Previous application and decision for the item	0	0	0	1	4	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	10
Help available from another source	0	2	2	5	1	0	0	0	2	4	2	1	19
Priority too low to meet from the budget	0	0	3	1	1	4	0	0	2	0	3	1	15
Alternative available to the whole application	0	2	4	2	0	0	0	1	4	1	1	1	16
Others not covered above	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	10	13	6	34
Total	0	7	11	25	30	33	20	16	21	23	34	12	232

"A Good Deal for Deaf Children"

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration the Minister for the Disabled has given to the report from the National Deaf Children's Society entitled "A Good Deal for Deaf Children"; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I have not yet received a copy of the report, but I look forward with interest to reading it.

Private Residential Homes

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the maximum weekly payment made by his Department in Bradford to support elderly people in private residential homes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not available on this basis. Help through income support with the fees of residential care homes in Bradford is subject to the national limits. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the current limits on 27 October 1988 at column 483.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the difference between charges levied by private residential homes in Bradford and the maximum weekly payment made by his Department to support elderly people living in such homes; what is the current minimum and maximum difference in Bradford; how many elderly people have been evicted from residential homes in Bradford in the last 12 months because of inability to pay fees; how many elderly people are now under notice to leave private residential homes because of inability to pay fees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Help with fees in an independent residential care home can be available through income support, subject to national limits. The level of a person's charges is a matter for him and the proprietor to agree based on the services to be provided. We have had representations from Bradford and elsewhere about the levels of income support in relation to fees charged by homes. However, it is not our policy to meet all fees, however high, and the levels of income support are enough to meet the fees in the majority of cases. The Department does not collect information on the remaining points.

HEALTH

Cyclotron Machine (St. Thomas's Hospital)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what grounds his Department decided to consult interested parties before making his decision to provide funds for the purchase of a cyclotron machine for St. Thomas's hospital; and if he will list the groups he consulted.

Mr. Freeman: No external advice was received before the decision was taken to contribute to the charitable funds being raised by the Cyclotron Trust.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he intends to continue to provide 60 per cent. of the funds for the running costs of the cyclotron machine at St. Thomas's hospital in the light of concern over the safety of the machine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have undertaken to meet up to 60 per cent. of the direct running costs of the cyclotron once it begins to operate, in so far as these are not met from other sources. We have given careful consideration to the views that have so far been expressed by the medical profession, but they have not produced any evidence which would cause us to change our views of the proposed project.

Motor Neurone Disease

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the mortality statistics for motor neurone disease for each year from 1959 for which data is available.

Mr. Freeman: The information is shown in the table.

Number of deaths from Motor Neurone Disease[1] in England and Wales, 1959-1988

Year	Number of deaths		
	Males	Females	Total
1959	308	260	568
1960	311	227	538
1961	306	230	536
1962	311	228	539
1963	290	227	517
1964	346	258	604
1965	375	265	640
1966	341	271	612
1967	343	269	612
1968	327	278	605

Year	Number of deaths		
	Males	Females	Total
1969	340	268	608
1970	342	261	603
1971	382	339	721
1972	385	298	683
1973	372	307	679
1974	367	322	689
1975	376	338	714
1976	402	324	726
1977	418	358	776
1978	384	392	776
1979	488	386	874
1980	402	353	755
1981	493	390	883
1982	458	366	824
1983	481	461	942
1984	565	440	1,005
1985	570	533	1,103
1986	591	490	1,081
1987	598	525	1,123
[2]1988	592	530	1,122

[1]From 1959 to 1967 motor neurone disease and muscular atrophy was classified to the International Diseases of Classification (ICD) 7th revision code 356. Similarly from 1968 to 1978 motor neurone disease was classified to ICD 8th revision ICD code 348 and from 1979 onwards 9th revision ICD code 325.2 was used.
[2]Provisional.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the research projects on motor neurone disease funded by the Department in each year since 1959 for which data are available and the level of funding provided.

Mr. Freeman: At present, the health and personal social services research programme does not include any research specifically into motor neurone disease (MND). However, the Department of Health does fund a number of studies about service delivery where MND sufferers would be among the service users. These studies are as follows:

(a) Research on aspects of physiotherapy provision, carried out by the Centre for Physiotherapy Research at King's college, London.

(b) Research on speech therapy provision, in particular;
a study of Communication Aid Centres being carried out by Dr. Anne Chamberlain at Leeds;
a study on speech therapy services (demands and staffing) being undertaken by Dr. Philip Davies at Oxford.

(c) Research on disability generally is relevant to MND. An important example is the OPCS disability survey which, of course, includes MND sufferers.

A full list of earlier research into MND is not readily available. However, the Department's handbook of research and development, published annually, contains information about all directly funded research. Copies are available in the Library.

Disabled People

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has a specific policy on giving financial support to voluntary organisations dealing with disabilities which are run by the disabled.

Mr. Freeman: The major considerations in determining support to voluntary organisations dealing with disabilities are the services they offer to disabled people and the resources available. A number of organisations that we currently support are run by disabled people.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department intends to review its level of funding to the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People.

Mr. Freeman: The Department is currently considering an application from the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People for funds under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 for the period 1989-90 to 1991-92.

Organ Transplants

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines have been issued by his Department relating to the removal and transplantation of organs from anacephalic infants.

Mr. Freeman: The Chief Medical Officer wrote to regional medical officers on 1 February 1988 (PL/CMO(88)3). This letter drew to their attention a report of the working party, from the conference of medical royal colleges on organ transplantation in neonates. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Expenditure

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cumulative total of his Department's expenditure since May 1979 to date over and above the expenditure level prevailing in May 1979.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 29 June 1989]:* Between 1979-80 and 1989-90 total gross expenditure on the health and personal social services programme in England has increased by nearly 36 per cent. in real terms. The table shows gross expenditure in each year since 1979-80 at 1989-90 prices and the cumulative real terms increases during this period:

HPSS Gross Expenditure 1979-80 to 1989-90 at Current Prices
£ millions

	at 1989-90 prices	*Cumulative increase in real terms*
1979-80	18,574	—
1980-81	20,208	1,634
1981-82	20,591	2,017
1982-83	20,978	2,404
1983-84	21,353	2,779
1984-85	21,804	3,230
1985-86	21,868	3,294
1986-87	22,869	4,295
1987-88	24,006	5,432
1988-89	24,884	6,310
1989-90	25,230	6,656

Compensation Payments

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list, by regional health authority, the number of compensation payments made exceeding £100,000 paid in each year from 1984-85 to 1987-88.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 3 July 1989]:* The number of compensation payments exceeding £100,000 notified to the Department in each year 1984-85 to 1987-88, together with the amounts involved, is as follows:

Region	1984-85 Number of cases	1984-85 Amounts £	1985-86 Number of cases	1985-86 Amounts £	1986-87 Number of cases	1986-87 Amounts £	1987-88 Number of cases	1987-88 Amounts £
Northern	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Yorkshire	—	—	1	385,000	—	—	—	—
Trent	—	—	1	270,000	3	115,000 130,000 375,000	—	—
East Anglian	—	—	—	—	1	151,222	—	—
North West Thames	1	220,760	—	—	—	—	—	—
North East Thames	1	235,000	—	—	—	—	1	430,000
South East Thames	—	—	1	154,095	—	—	—	—
South West Thames	—	—	—	—	3	600,000 150,498 108,434	—	—
Wessex	—	—	1	275,000	1	175,000	—	—
Oxford	—	—	—	—	1	550,000	—	—
South Western	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	350,000
West Midlands	—	—	1	250,000	2	175,000 260,000	1	220,000
Mersey	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	375,000
North Western	—	—	—	—	1	207,000	—	—

Note: The figures shown represent the total amount of the award/settlement, excluding costs. They do not take account of the fact that the health authority's liability may have been reduced (in a case involving a medical accident) by a contribution from a medical defence organisation.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Lawson: The ECOFIN Council met in Brussels on 10 July. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council discussed the economic situation in the Community and the Commission's second quarterly review; and confirmed the economic policy guidelines set out in the 1988-89 annual economic report adopted last December. The Commission and the presidency explained their plans for implementing the decisions on European monetary union reached at the recent European Council at Madrid.

War Graves (VAT)

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in which year and on whose authority value added tax was first imposed on the maintenance of United States war graves in the United Kingdom; when and on whose authority war graves in the United Kingdom and European Economic Community nations were exempted from such value added tax charges; and when he proposes taking action to ensure that the war graves of our American and Commonwealth allies are not less favourably treated than those of our former enemies.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 6 July 1989]:* In 1985 Her Majesty's Customs and Excise ruled that suplies in the United Kingdom of goods and services for the American Battle Monuments Commission were chargeable with VAT.

There was an exchange of notes between the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States of America in 1952 regarding relief from taxation of United States Government expenditures in the United Kingdom. Information is not presently available on the position in other countries of the European Communities.

Her Majesty's Customs and Excise is looking into the background to the ruling in 1985 to see whether it was correct then and is appropriate now.

Manufactured Goods (Imports)

Mr. Gale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he intends to take to increase the volume of information provided by Customs and Excise marketing agents relating to imported manufactured goods; and how he intends to make the information available to British manufacturers.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* Customs and Excise is now making available to its approved marketing agents, in addition to traditional United Kingdom trade statistical data, the names and addresses of consignees shown on import declarations, listed against the commodities they import. This new facility has been available since 22 May 1989. The information covers importations from 1 January 1989 and is updated monthly. Commodities are distinguished by an appropriate commodity code; these are published in the Customs and Excise tariff. In most cases information is made available at the more detailed nine-digit level, but in

some instances it is provided at a less detailed level where to provide at nine-digit level would lead to disclosure of confidential quantity and value data. Information covers the whole range of imported, including manufactured, goods.

The marketing agents will supply the information in a form and manner which is convenient to their customers, and at an attractive price. British manufacturers who wish to obtain this data should therefore contact a marketing agent. This new service was announced by Customs and Excise in a press notice dated 1 June 1989 in which the names and addresses of the approved agents are listed.

Barclays Bank

Mr. Straw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what mention was made in the discussions or negotiations with Barclays bank over the charge to value added tax for the redevelopment of its new headquarters of the bank's co-operation with the Government scheme for top-up loans.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 July 1989]:* None.

ESA Payments

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the policy of the Crown Estate Commissioners in respect of the clawback of ESA payments made to tenants of farms within the estate.

Mr. Lawson: The only designated environmentally sensitive areas which affect the Crown Estate are in Wales.

The Crown Estate Commissioners are content that either commoners with registered rights or tenants on the Crown Estate within environmentally sensitive areas should, if they so wish, enter the ESA scheme without any payment to the Crown Estate.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Television Licences

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what would be the total cost of allowing pensioner households currently holding a colour television licence to pay only a monochrome licence fee; and what would be the additional cost per licence for non-pensioner licence holders if this additional cost was met through increases in the licence fee.

Mr. Renton: The cost would be about £260 million a year in terms of revenue lost to the BBC, which would mean that other licence holders would have to pay about £22 more for their licences.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of television licences and the number of households; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: It is estimated that there are about 22,150,000 households in the United Kingdom, the Channel islands and the Isle of Man. As at 31 May 1989 there were 19,440,211 television licences in force.

Police National Computer

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he received the County NatWest report into the future of the police national computer organisation; if he will place a copy in the Library; what assessment he has made of considerations of security, accountability and public confidence which are addressed in the report; and what action he proposes to take on the recommendations contained therein.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The County NatWest report was received on 22 May; a copy of that part relating to the future of the police national computer organisation has been placed in the Library. The Department is now consulting senior management, the trade unions, the local authorities and the police service on its findings, including the issues referred to by the hon. Member. We shall be considering carefully the report's recommendations, together with the results of this consultation process, in due course.

Racial Hatred

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to seek additional powers to control and prevent static rallies likely to stir up racial hatred.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In its White Paper "Review of Public Order Law" (Cmnd 9510, May 1985), the Government concluded that the likelihood of incitement of racial hatred should not be a ground for banning a procession and that there should be no power to ban public assemblies. It is an offence under part III of the Public Order Act 1986 to use threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour or to publish or distribute material which is intended or likely to stir up racial hatred.

Broadcasting

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will respond to the speech of the hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington on 13 June, *Official Report*, columns *871-72*, on how hard pornography emanating from an established European television channel can be prevented from being transmitted in the United Kingdom by satellite or other means.

Mr. Renton: I wrote to my hon. Friend on this subject on 6 July. In that letter I said:

"It was to avoid precisely this sort of problem that we were keen to secure agreement on provisions in the Council of Europe convention on transfrontier television which would preserve acceptable standards of taste and decency. I am pleased to say that we were successful in that objective. Article 7 of the convention requires that programmes should not be indecent or contain pornography. This is also reflected in article 22 of the draft directive, which places on broadcasters a responsibility to ensure that they do not transmit programmes which might seriously impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors, in particular those that involve pornography or gratuitous violence."

Immigration

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the flow of people of Indian sub-continent cultural origin into and out of the United Kingdom in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement as to the reasons, where applicable, for the imbalance in the flows.

Mr. Renton: The information is not available in the form requested. "People of Indian sub-continent cultural origin" include British passport holders.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the net inflow of visitors from Hong Kong in each of the last eight weeks; and what was the comparable figure in 1988.

Mr. Renton: It is not possible from the available information to provide the figures requested.

Prison Officers' Houses

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to the answer of 10 July, *Official Report*, column *358*, who purchased the 39 prison officers' houses at Culcheth: why they had remained vacant for between seven and eight years; and at what price he expects to sell the six houses that became vacant during 1988-89.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The 39 prison officers' houses at Culcheth were purchased by Beazer Urban Developments Limited. Properties had remained vacant and surplus to requirements for between seven and eight years for a variety of reasons. These included the need to ascertain whether any would be needed to accommodate staff from the new prison at Thorn Cross, which opened in 1985; the need to clarify the requirements of the local authority as regards upgrading the roads and sewers to make them suitable for adoption; and the need to negotiate an easement for a new rising pumped main through adjoining land. The prices of the six houses that became vacant during 1988-89 have yet to be finally determined by the district valuer, but are likely to be in the region of £45,000 for the five three bedroom semi-detached houses, and £30,000 for the two bedroom semi-detached house.

Mr. K. Hussain

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Mr. K. Hussain, whose reference is H4/8/12/88, first applied for British citizenship; and when a decision is to be taken on his application.

Mr. Renton: As the hon. Member knows, we have been unable to trace this application on the reference given. To do so we would need Mr. Hussain's full name and his date and place of birth. I shall write to the hon. Member once we have this information.

DEFENCE

Weapons Displays (Council Bans)

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to how many councils have placed a ban on static weapon displays by the armed forces on council property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Five councils have asked that the armed forces should exclude or limit displays of weapons when mounting recruiting or promotional events in their areas.

Independent Schools

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many independent schools in respect of which grants were available to service families have ceased to be eligible for such funds in the last five years; and if he will state the reasons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is nothing I can add to the answer which was given to my hon. Friend on 9 June at column *257*.

Army Polo Teams

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will ensure that every serving Army officer is made aware of the content of his reply to the hon. Member for Northampton, North on 6 July, *Official Report*, column *266*.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is no need to draw the attention of every serving Army officer to the reply of 6 July. In this matter, as in any other, an officer who is in any doubt should consult the regimental adjutant or his commanding officer.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when West Glamorgan county council is to be informed of the nuclear-powered warship safety committee's decision regarding berthing of nuclear submarines at Swansea; to whom it is to be communicated; what form the consultation with the council will take; what issues it will cover; and what powers the council has to stop the use of such a berth at the port.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 13 July 1989]:* The Ministry of Defence will be in touch with the chief executive of West Glamorgan county council as soon as the Royal Navy is ready to proceed. A public safety plan will need to be drawn up in consultation with council, fire, police and health officials. The disposition of naval vessels is a matter which affects national security, and as such it must remain the responsibility of central rather than local government. A defence policy can be effective only if applied on a national basis.

SCOTLAND

Voluntary Services

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list those hospitals in which WRVS or other voluntary bodies' facilities for the provision of patients' and or relatives' services have been either removed or reduced;

(2) why facilities made available to the WRVS at Stirling Royal infirmary have been reduced.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Proposals to remove or reduce the facilities used by the WRVS or other voluntary bodies for the provision of services to patients and others are a matter for the health board responsible for the hospital, in consultation with the voluntary body concerned. Information on this is not held centrally, but I am not aware of any case where the health board and the voluntary body have failed to reach an agreement.

Forth Valley health board and the WRVS discussed the future of the WRVS canteen at Stirling Royal infirmary because wards in the immediate vicinity of its site were being relocated. Both parties concluded that the canteen should move to a new site in the maternity-gynaecology block nearby. The new canteen opened during May. WRVS facilities have not been reduced since the existing

canteen has also been kept open because not all the wards have yet been relocated. No final decision has been taken about the future of the site.

I have written recently in response to a letter from the Scottish chairman of the WRVS, emphasising my appreciation for the work of such organisations, which is greatly appreciated by health boards and, most important, by patients and their relatives.

Scottish Health Service Advisory Council

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Scottish Health Service Advisory Council will be able to initiate and pursue matters without prior approval by himself; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The remit of the Scottish Health Service Advisory Council is:

"Where requested by or agreed with the Secretary of State to advise him on the exercise of his functions under the National Health Service Acts and to give advice on good practice to Health Boards, other Health Managers and those delivering Health Services."

Lothian Health Board

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the attendance of each of his appointments to Lothian health board together with the possible totals, for each member of the board and its sub-committees for the years *(a)* 1987-88, *(b)* 1988-89 and *(c)* 1989-90.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Appointments

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many posts in Scottish institutions of higher education funded directly by his Department have been filled without advertisment over the period from 1983 to June 1989.

Mr. Lang: The arrangements for filling staff vacancies in the grant-aided colleges are for the college authorities to determine. The information requested is not collected by the Scottish Education Department.

Transport (Elderly and Disabled People)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish what information he has on the number of dial-a-ride and similar schemes for the elderly and disabled currently operating in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the number of dial-a-ride and similar schemes operating in Scotland is not held centrally.

Dental Education

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what decision he has reached on whether to reduce places for dental education in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The report of the working party to review dental provision in Scotland made recommendations for reductions in places for dental education in Scotland. With the agreement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, my right hon. and learned Friend sent the report to the Universities Funding Council and asked the council to consider the working party's advice in reaching decisions on undergraduate dental education.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the proportions of dental school graduates from the three dental schools in Scotland who stayed on to practice in Scotland, giving the information broken down by school and for each year since 1977 for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not held centrally in the form requested, but studies in recent years suggest that under 50 per cent. of the graduates of the Edinburgh school practice in Scotland whereas well over 50 per cent. of the graduates of the Dundee and Glasgow schools do so.

Gaelic Broadcasting

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to back the case for a Gaelic broadcasting council funded on a similar basis to S4C.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 13 July 1989]:* The implications of the recent White Paper for Gaelic broadcasting are still under consideration. An announcement will be made in due course.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Eggs

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to define in egg marketing regulations a fresh egg; and whether he intends to make sell-by stickers compulsory.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The egg marketing standards regulations of the European Community define quality standards for "fresh eggs", and require that the date or period of packing should be shown on the pack and provide that a sell-by date may also be added.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to introduce heavier fines for shops found selling bad eggs or other produce; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Eggs (Marketing Standards) Regulations 1985 already prescribe a substantial fine of up to £2,000 for an offence relating to the marketing of substandard eggs. Under the Food Act 1984 it is an offence to sell unfit food. The maximum fine applicable is again £2,000. In each particular case it is for the courts to decide upon the appropriate level of fine within the maximum.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to initiate further spot checks in the United Kingdom to test the quality of eggs; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The egg marketing inspectorate already carries out a systematic schedule of inspection visits to egg packing centres and wholesalers, and provides

technical assistance to trading standards officers at retail outlets, to ensure that eggs meet with requirements for quality, weight and labelling as prescribed by the egg marketing standards regulations of the European Community.

Anthrax

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any record of anthrax being confirmed in any wild animals during the last 10 years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Anthrax is not notifiable in animals in the wild and there are no records of cases having occurred in Great Britain.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what steps he is taking to determine the cause of the current outbreak of anthrax in Wales;

(2) whether he has any evidence of contaminated animal feed being the cause of the current outbreak of anthrax in Wales.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Detailed epidemiological investigations have been undertaken including attempts to culture anthrax from food hoppers and environmental supplies. All results have been negative.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the incubation period of anthrax in *(a)* humans, *(b)* cattle, *(c)* sheep and *(d)* pigs.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The incubation period of anthrax in animals is variable in all species and can range from 24 hours to 14 days. In man, incubation can be up to seven days, and is normally between two and five days.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in the light of the current outbreak of anthrax in Wales, he will now introduce a compulsory slaughter and compensation scheme in respect of this disease.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of anthrax have been recorded in the United Kingdom in each of the farm animal species during each of the last five years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is set out as follows:

1988 3 cattle
1987 6 cattle
1986 12 cattle; 2 sheep; 1 horse
1985 6 cattle
1984 9 cattle

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the susceptibility of bovine spongiform encephalopathy-infected cattle to other bovine ailments.

Mr. Donald Thompson: BSE-infected cattle are susceptible to all other bovine ailments.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Prisons (Education Services)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the amount of financial assistance given at present by the Inner London education authority towards education services at each London prison.

Mrs. Rumbold: The responsibility for education in Her Majesty's prisons rests with the Home Office. It discharges this responsibility by contracting with the relevant local education authorities to provide an education service to prisons. The Inner London education authority provides this service to Her Majesty's prisons in London. The cost of this provision is met by the Home Office.

Special Needs

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will use his powers under the Education Act 1981 to ensure compliance with the terms of the Act by the seven local education authorities which have failed to offer assessment and statementing procedures for more than 80 per cent. of children in their special schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The Department has considered the statements made in the fact sheet written by Mr. Will Swann and published recently by the Centre for Studies on Integration in Education (CSIE), in the light of the latest available statistical returns. A number of local education authorities have been asked for further information about the number of pupils who attend special schools and do not have statements of special educational needs. In the light of their replies the Secretary of State will consider what further action may need to be taken.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he is giving to those local authorities where the proportion of children with special needs segregated in special schools is increasing.

Mr. Butcher: It is for local education authorities to decide how they arrange to make the special educational provision required by pupils for whom they have made a statement of special educational needs. Section 2(2) of the Education Act 1981 places LEAs under a duty to secure that pupils with statements are educated in an ordinary school subject to the conditions described in section 2(3) of that Act. The Department will shortly be issuing a revised circular of guidance regarding the implementation of the 1981 Act.

Community Charge

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether head teachers will be required to notify community charge registration officers of the names and home addresses of all pupils in secondary education over 18 years of age.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. Community charge registration officers are not empowered to demand information other than from precepting or charging authorities or to approach schools directly.

Independent Schools

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many independent schools have been closed following a notice of complaint in the last five years.

Mr. Butcher: Since April 1984, five independent schools have closed following the issue of a notice of complaint.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to introduce an accreditation for independent schools supervised by Her Majesty's inspectorate.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has no plans to introduce an accreditation scheme for independent schools.

Dental Education

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the proportion of students admitted to each of the three dental schools in Scotland in October 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1983 who graduated on time, and the proportion who failed to graduate in dentistry; and what the corresponding proportions are for dental schools in the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Jackson: Information is not available centrally which directly relates graduate output with entrants to dentistry courses. The numbers of graduates in clinical dentistry in each of the three dental schools in Scotland in the last four years were as follows:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Dundee	48	n/a	33	44
Edinburgh	45	53	47	36
Glasgow	60	67	63	70
All United Kingdom	830	n/a	731	729

n/a not available.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has asked the Universities Funding Council to reach a decision on the undergraduate education recommendations of the report on dental provision in Scotland.

Mr. Jackson: With the agreement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has sent the report of the review of dental provision in Scotland to the Universities Funding Council, and asked the council to consider the working party's advice in reaching decisions on undergraduate dental education.

Motor Neurone Disease

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase funding for research into cause and treatment of motor neurone disease, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The main agency through which the Government fund medical research is the Medical Research Council, which receives a grant-in-aid from this Department. The council's grant for 1989-90 is £176 million, an increase of 17 per cent. over its grant for 1988-89 of £150 million. The council itself determines the allocation of the funds at its disposal. The council is always willing to consider soundly-based proposals for new research programmes in competition with other proposals.

Dental Schools (Scotland)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish figures on the average academic attainment in terms of points scores in Scottish certificate of education highers and general certificate of education A-levels for entrants to the three Scottish dental schools and also the number of applicants per place for each school for each of the last nine years.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not collected by the Department.

Grant-maintained Status

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will clarify the role of teacher governors in decisions by school governing bodies on whether to ballot parents on grant-maintained status.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Government's intention, as reflected in the provisions of the Education Reform Act, is that teacher governors should play a full part in a decision on whether to ballot parents about grant-maintained status for the school. I am considering what amendments might be made to the School Government Regulations 1987 to ensure they reflect that intention. Revised regulations will be brought into force at the beginning of the next school year.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fermanagh (Ministerial Visits)

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when any junior Minister from the Northern Ireland Office last visited either Newtownbutler or Rosslea Royal Ulster Constabulary station in south-east Fermanagh; and what was the cost of the security operation thus entailed.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No Minister has visited Newtownbutler or Rosslea RUC station recently.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa (Nuclear Missile Test)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any information on the Republic of South Africa's plans to test a nuclear capable intermediate-range ballistic missile system developed with the aid of Israel.

Mr. Waldegrave: Although we are aware of recent press reports on this subject, we cannot substantiate them. We have, however, instructed Her Majesty's embassies in Pretoria and Tel Aviv to inquire with the relevant authorities about the validity of the reports.

Tibet

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking to monitor the internal situation *(a)*

in Tibet in general and *(b)* in Lhasa in particular, with regard to possible human rights abuses by Chinese forces; what representations he has made in 1989 to the Chinese authorities regarding their occupation of Tibet; what steps he is taking to pursue the proposal put forward by the Dalai Lama for a self-governing Tibet under Chinese sovereignty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Although the imposition of martial law has reduced the outward flow of information on Tibet, the British embassy in Peking continues to monitor the situation closely by all available means. We have made clear to the Chinese authorities on many occasions the real concern in this country about human rights in Tibet. While we continue to believe that the most promising solution to the problem of Tibet is through dialogue between the Chinese Government and the Tibetan people, including the Dalai Lama, our immediate concern in recent weeks has been to bring home to the Chinese authorities our sense of shock and outrage at the brutality with which they suppressed those who were demonstrating for democracy in Peking.

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he is having with the Government of Cyprus as to threats that Turkish people leaving Bulgaria could be settled in the Turkish-occupied town of Famagusta; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The Turkish Cypriot offer to resettle ethnic Turkish refugees from Bulgaria in Varosha, the sector of Famagusta controlled by the Turkish army, was one of a number of topics I discussed with President Vassiliou on 10 July. We agreed that implementation of that offer would adversely affect the prospects for negotiation of a settlement of the Cyprus problem through the current intercommunal talks.

French Revolution

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy not to join in celebrations of Bastille day in France on 14 July or the bicentenary of the French revolution.

Mrs. Chalker: France is a close ally and partner. My right hon. and learned Friend will be in Paris on 14 to 16 July for the ceremonies marking the bicentenary of the French revolution and the declaration of the rights of man, followed by the Economic Summit.

Human Rights

Mr. Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made complaining about the denial of human rights in the last five years in Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Eggar: We have made a number of representations about human rights to the Czechoslovakian authorities over the last five years, but the precise information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made complaining about denial of human rights in the last five years in Burkina.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made complaining about denial of human rights and the use of torture in the last five years in Barbados.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made complaining about the denial of human rights in the last five years in Brunei.

Mr. Eggar: None. We expressed concern about certain aspects of human rights in Brunei at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The Brunei Government are aware of our concern.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made complaining about denial of human rights in the last five years in Burundi.

Mr. Eggar: We have made a number of representations to the Burundi authorities about human rights over the last five years. Following the ethnic violence last August we made a demarche to the Government of Burundi in concert with our EC partners. We are pleased to note the recent efforts of the Burundi Government to improve the human rights situation.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made complaining about denial of human rights in the last five years in Bhutan.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made complaining about denial of human rights in the last five years in Cyprus.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made complaining about denial of human rights in the last five years in Kiribati.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has made complaining about denial of human rights in the last five years in the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the hours of opening at the following posts *(a)* New Delhi, *(b)* Bombay, *(c)* Dhaka, *(d)* Islamabad, *(e)* Karachi, *(f)* Nairobi and *(g)* Dar Es-Salaam; and how many staff were employed at each post dealing with entry clearance matters on 1 January and for each of the 10 years before.

Mr. Eggar: This information is not readily available. I will reply to the hon. Member in due course.

Mr. I. A. Alikazi

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Mr. Irfan Abdul Alikazi, whose date of birth is 13 October 1969, first applied to the post in Bombay to enter the United Kingdom; on what dates he has been interviewed at the post; and when a decision is to be taken on his application.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not readily available. A further reply will be sent to the hon. Member in due course.

Mr. M. Yasin

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Mr. Mohd Yasin, who was born in 1962 and whose reference is SN 81140, first applied to the post in Islamabad to enter the United Kingdom; and when a decision is going to be taken on his application.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not readily available. A further reply will be sent to the hon. Member in due course.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

No-fault Compensation

Mr. Hind: To ask the Attorney-General what progress has been made with Recommendation 62 of the Review Body on Civil Justice that consideration should be given to the feasibility of a no-fault scheme for less serious road accidents.

The Solicitor-General: The Government have accepted the recommendation of the report of the review body on civil justice that the Lord Chancellor should consider the feasibility of a no-fault compensation scheme, restricted to less serious road accidents and financed by private insurance.

The review body pointed out that a number of advantages might flow from the introduction of such a scheme. It suggested that it would reduce uncertainty for claimants, avoid the delays and costs associated with litigation and, by removing disputes from the courts, reduce pressure on the court system.

On the other hand, as the review body made clear, one disadvantage of such a scheme is that motor insurance premiums could rise. Such a proposal gives rise to a number of other difficult issues, including the threshold of seriousness that will determine whether an accident falls outside the scheme; whether it should cover accidents where the highway authority is held to have been at fault; and whether certain categories of driver, for example, drinking drivers, should be excluded from the scheme. There is also the danger that such a scheme could undermine efforts of insurance companies to make drivers who cause accidents bear some of the costs through higher premiums. These difficult issues will need to be carefully studied and weighed alongside the possible advantages before any such scheme can be taken forward.

As the review body proposed, consideration of the feasibility of introducing such a scheme will be the subject of consultation with the insurance industry. Other interested parties, including the motoring organisations, will also be invited to submit their views. Since no-fault insurance schemes are already in operation in various other countries, including New Zealand and a number of states in the United States, the study will need to take account of the experience of these countries.

It must be emphasised that this is a feasibility study, and it would therefore be wrong to assume at this stage that it will necessarily result in a change in existing arrangements.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish illustrative figures for 1989-90 in respect of Her Majesty's Government's new system of local government finance so that comparison can be made with current local government taxes.

Mr. Gummer: I hope to publish illustrative figures for 1989-90 community charges later this month.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will tabulate what a typical married couple with two children and one wage-earner living in the London borough of Waltham Forest would pay *(a)* in community charge and *(b)* in a system of capital value rates plus local income tax paid in proportions of 80 to 20, respectively, if the wage earner earned (i) £10,000, (ii) £15,000, (iii) £20,000, (iv) £25,000 and (v) £30,000 and lived in (i) rented accommodation, (ii) property owned by that wage earner worth £60,000 and (iv) property owned by that wage earner worth £90,000, making the same assumptions as in his reply to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) on 22 March at column *626*.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is provided in the table.

Illustrative annual liability in Waltham Forest under a system of capital value rates combined with local income tax 1988-89

Earnings £	*(i) and (ii) Property value £60,000 owned or rented* £	*(iii) Property value £90,000 owned or rented* £	*Illustrative community charge 1988-89* £
(i) 10,000	645	925	269
(ii) 15,000	715	995	269
(iii) 20,000	785	1,070	269
(iv) 25,000	860	1,140	269
(v) 30,000	930	1,210	269

The ability of a person in rented accommodation would be the same as for a person living in property owned by that person of the same value. The figures are based on the illustrative tax rates placed in the Library on 23 June 1988 and are for 1988-89. It is assumed that the family has no entitlement to rebates. Taxable income is taken as earnings less £4,095, the married man's allowance in each case.

Community Charge

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the environment from his latest information how much local authorities are planning to spend in 1988-89 and 1989-90 on *(a)* revenue and *(b)* capital in setting up the community charge; what were the comparable allowances made in the rate support grant settlement and in capital allocations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: On revenue, returns made by authorities in England show a provisional outturn of £33 million for 1988-89 and a budget figure of £203 million for 1989-90. On capital, the provisional outturn figure is £28 million for 1988-89. No figures are yet available for 1989-90. The resources made available to authorities are, on revenue, £110 million in the rate support grant settlement for 1989-90; and on capital, allocations of £25 million for 1988-89 and allocations of £135 million for 1989-90.

Football Matches (Ministerial Visits)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of occasions when he or any of his Ministers visited a football ground or football match within *(a)* the last 12 months and *(b)* the last two years; and if he will state the grounds or matches visited.

Mr. Moynihan: I have attended the following football matches since my appointment as Minister for Sport:

Venue			*Date*
Charlton Athletic	v	Arsenal	3 October 1987
Tottenham Hotspur	v	Wimbledon	31 October 1987
Charlton Athletic	v	Chelsea	20 December 1987
Manchester United	v	Charlton Athletic	1 January 1988
Luton Town	v	Derby County	16 January 1988
Charlton Athletic	v	Liverpool	23 January 1988
Hartlepool United	v	Crewe Alexandra	27 February 1988
Derby County	v	Arsenal	26 March 1988
Charlton Athletic	v	Newcastle United	23 April 1988
Millwall	v	Newcastle United	19 November 1988
Charlton Athletic	v	Luton Town	14 January 1989
Charlton Athletic	v	Kettering Town	28 January 1989
Millwall	v	Liverpool	29 January 1989
Fulham	v	Bristol City	18 February 1989
Brentford	v	Bury	25 February 1989
Charlton Athletic	v	Manchester United	22 April 1989

I have also attended the FA Cup and Littlewoods Cup finals in 1988 and 1989 as well as attending international matches.

In addition I have visited the grounds of Reading FC, Liverpool FC and Aston Villa FC on non-match days.

I understand that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Southampton Itchen (Mr. Chope), have also attended matches.

Shared Ownership Claims

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total number of shared ownership claims received by local authorities by each region in England and for England as a whole during each year from 1980-81 to 1988-89.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 10 July 1989]:* The available information is shown in the table:

Right to buy shared ownership claims received by DOE region

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Northern	—	—	—	—	—
Yorkshire and Humberside	1	1	2	2	—
East Midlands	5	2	5	—	—
Eastern	10	18	7	7	8
London	49	78	29	25	33
South East	35	36	64	100	19
South West	6	8	4	2	2
West Midlands	2	1	—	—	8
North West (including Cumbria)	14	6	—	—	—
England	122	150	111	136	70

Playgrounds

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the regulations covering the construction of children's playgrounds.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 13 July 1989]:* The construction of childrens' playgrounds is not subject to regulation. However, British Standard BS 5696 recommends specifications for construction and performance of play equipment intended for permanent installation out of doors, and a code of practice for its installation and maintenance. The code of practice is currently under revision. Furthermore, a new British Standard BS 7188, which will specify methods of test for impact-absorbing playground surfaces, is to be published later this year.

Bristol Channel (Beaches)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will pay an official visit to the beaches along the English side of the Bristol channel, to observe the degree of pollution apparent both on the beach and in the sea.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 13 July 1989]:* My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit the Bristol channel. He receives regular reports from the Wessex and South West water authorities on the quality of bathing waters along the English side of the Bristol channel, and local authorities are responsible for dealing with the pollution of beaches. Water authorities have been asked to draw up improvement programmes with the aim of bringing all bathing waters identified under the EEC bathing water directive into compliance by the mid-1990s.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he proposes to take in the light of the findings of the Warren Spring laboratories on the problems associated with the United Kingdom chlorofluorocarbon bank contained in refrigeration equipment and plastic foam estimated to comprise 100,000 tonnes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 13 July 1989]:* My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced on 10 May that he was commissioning an independent study of the impact of business of the existing and envisaged control on emissions of ozone-depleting substances. The consultants engaged should deliver their report to him late this summer. The commissioning of a second phase at an early date is under consideration. It would study the technology-practical arrangements and economics of the recovery, recycling or destruction of such substances from products and industrial processes: this would cover the question of the CFC bank referred to by my hon. Friend.

National Rivers Authority

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many additional posts have been created in *(a)* the water authorities and *(b)* the National Rivers Authority as a result of the split of regulatory functions for each water authority region.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 13 July 1989]:* The establishment of the National Rivers Authority as a separate regulatory body has been undertaken on the basis that the NRA must have the staff it needs to carry out its statutory functions. It is recognised that this may require some additional staff in the areas of pollution control, water resources and support services, but it is not possible to assess how many additional posts in either the water authorities or the NRA are specifically attributable to the separation of the regulatory functions beyond the 55 to 60 new posts at the NRA's central policy unit.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people will be employed by the National Rivers Authority for each regional unit on 1 September.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 13 July 1989]:* The best estimate of the numbers of staff who will be employed in the regional units of the National Rivers Authority on 1 September is as follows:

	Number
Anglian	1,015
Northumbrian	130
North West	762
Severn Trent	784
Southern	543
South West	379
Thames	1,290
Welsh	664
Wessex	371
Yorkshire	531

These figures may be subject to minor changes between now and vesting day. In addition, there will be some 55 to 60 staff in the central policy unit in London.

K Formulae

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends *(a)* to issue and *(b)* to make public the K formulae for each water authority and each statutory water company.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 13 July 1989]:* I intend if possible to issue decisions on K formulae to the water authorities and to announce those decisions within the next month. Ks for the statutory water companies will be finalised and announced later in the year.

EC Competition Policy

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has recently had discussions with the European Commissioner for Competition on the implications for European competition policy of water privatisation.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 13 July 1989]:* I have had no recent discussions with the Commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, who issued a statement on 7 February saying that the Commission had not found anything in the Government's water privatisation proposals which would raise problems as far as Community law is concerned in the fields of competition or company capital structure.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

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Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

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Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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